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THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY
1923

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The Junior College in the Education of Girls

By Marion Coats, Principal of Bradford Academy, formerly President, The National Association of Principals of Schools for Girls.

No country in the world has less uniformity in its institutions than America. Especially is this true of education. Every school and college and every teacher is free to try out methods and systems which seem promising, and the greatest diversity exists. But occasionally in the midst of such variety, a new generic form appears which justifies all preceding experimentation.—Such an outgrowth is the Junior College. Its origin and nomenclature are due to the University of Chicago, which, from its founding, has made a distinct division between the first two and last two years of collegiate work; but in its ultimate form, the Junior College is an institution which offers the first two years of standard college work, and may or may not be directly connected with advanced courses. It is a link between the secondary courses and real collegiate work. It differs from the Senior College in curriculum—offering a broad course on which later specialization can be based and having a more limited elective system and a more careful supervision of individual work.

Of special importance in the education of girls is the separate Junior College for Women. There are fewer excellent four-year colleges for women than for men, with resulting selective processes which are necessary but exclusive. Increased desire for college education by men may be an aftermath of the war, but the rate of the increasing demand for women is too steady to be due to this one factor, or to be likely to end when we have settled back into ways of peace. Consequently we must prepare to meet this demand not merely in the immediate future but also for a long continued stretch of years. To create a sufficient number of four-year colleges would be not only enormously expensive, but wasteful as well, since many girls can carry successfully the first year or two of college work, who are totally unable to cope with the severer standards of upper classmanship. At the same time, such girls should go on to the limit of their capacity—the broader opportunities should be extended for another two year period, especially as it is in just these two years that girls first become acquainted with the elements of economics, sociology, psychology, and other college courses which make them better wives and mothers, and more intelligent citizens.

In these two years, the relative abilities become apparent which were not clearly differentiated at the beginning of the Junior College course. The senior colleges are saved waste and those dropping out from four-year colleges can be replaced by better material. Most important of all, a convenient and honorable stopping point is afforded so that the girl who reaches her mental maturity early need not begin her career in the world with a sense of inferiority.

The Junior College solves yet another large problem. The girl who is looking forward to earning her own living shortly can often be saved for a profession if she can spend only two years in professional training. A profession today almost connotes a monied class, so expensive is the training for it. Again, a girl whose heart is set on a vocation can often be persuaded to wait and take a two-year course which will give her more background, when she would resolutely decline to consider a full four-year course.

Finally, segregation for girls in the Junior College for women exclusively is excellent. The first taste of freedom, of absence from home, is unsettling at best; and the small group, living in daily association with older women who are interested but wise in their interference, becomes stronger in scholarship and in principles of life. The separate Junior College has its appointed task in these days of experiment and change.

Marion Coats.

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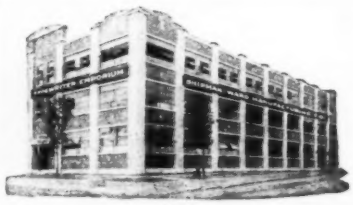

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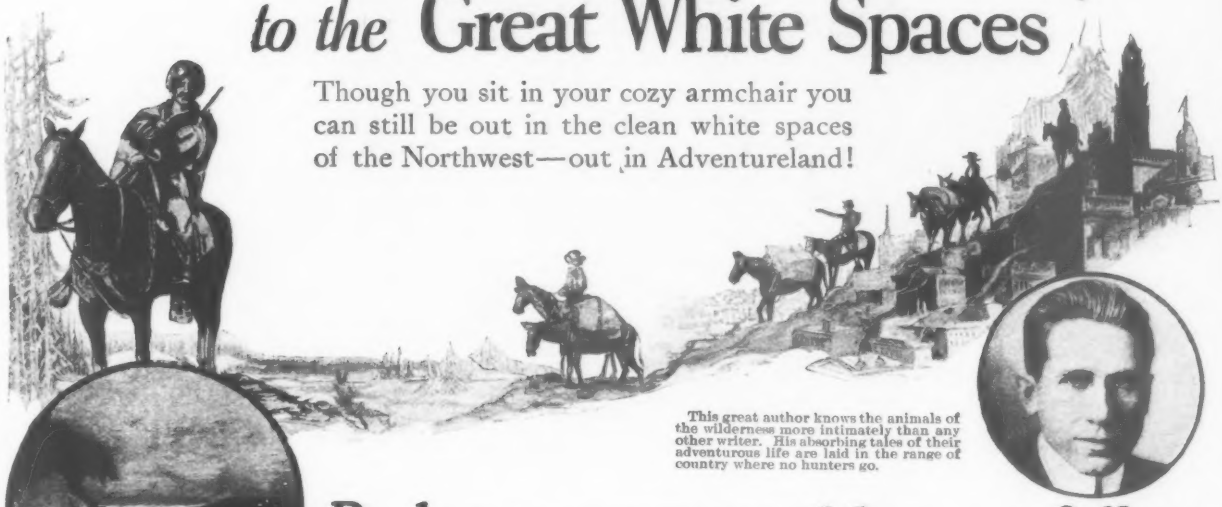

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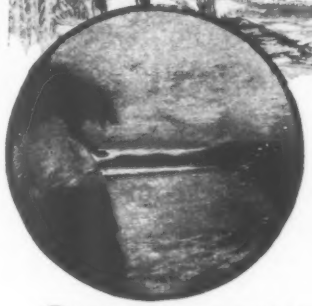

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Do you sing?..... *If not, would you like to?*.....

No. 2—Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar Makes Good

JULIUS CAESAR had his faults; but he certainly was no coward. Profligate that he was, he feared no living man or set of men. On one of his Syrian war journeys, it is told, he was captured by Egyptian pirates who coolly informed him he would remain their prisoner until his friends produced a million dollars. "A million dollars!" he exclaimed, "why, I owe personally more than that. Let me go or I'll come back some fine day and crucify the whole bunch." But the pirates held him, nevertheless, until Rome notified them that the million was ready for Caesar's return.

But once back at his marble desk, the General refused to ship the money. "Hold it until I die, and then pay my debts. I'll go back and fix up this other thing." So he went once more to Syria, as he had promised, crucified the necessary pirates, and fell in love with Cleopatra. The ransom fund was kept for his creditors after death. Nowadays one does not have to argue with pirates to accumulate a stated sum as a guarantee for creditors. He can get an insurance company, for a stipend a year, to make this guarantee for him. Many business men find life insurance a very great convenience in matters of this sort.

OLIVE TELL
Film and Stage Star
Photograph by Ira D. Schwarz, New York

GLADYS LESLIE
Film Star
Photograph by Ira D. Schwarz, New York

ETHELIND TERRY
in "The Music Box Revue"
Photograph by Apeda, New York

MARJORIE PETERSON
in "Greenwich Village Follies"
Photo by Edwin Bower Hesser, New York

BETTY BLYTHE
Film Star
Photo by Alfred Cheney Johnston, New York

GLADYS LOFTUS
in "Sally"
Photo by Alfred Cheney Johnston, New York

The Baby

By THOMAS L. MASSON

Decorations by John Scott Williams

The word *spiritual* has of late come into such general use that unless its real meaning is made plain, it is in danger of being misjudged. Even now it is rapidly coming to be connected with spirits, and is supposed to be the doubtful attribute of certain vague and ethereal people who go about with their heads held high in the air and serve no useful or practical purpose.

We do not see and we rarely feel the air, yet without it we should all perish.

In its right sense, the word *spiritual* is one of the most powerful words there are, and its power is very often demonstrated through material substances. Indeed, it is only by the expression of the *spiritual* through material substances that we can grasp its full meaning. And the most universal illustration of this great law is—the *baby*.

The Brotherhood of Babies extends all over the world. It is not like the Brotherhood of Man, something to look forward to; it exists now. All babies, everywhere, are on the same democratic plane. They have no social distinctions, no snobbery, no envies or jealousies. North and south, east and west, carried in baskets on the backs of sturdy mothers, lolling on the ground on blankets or lying in lace-trimmed cribs, all babies are innately, cosmically united by a common purpose—a baby is the master link of the chain that binds the Unknown to the Known.

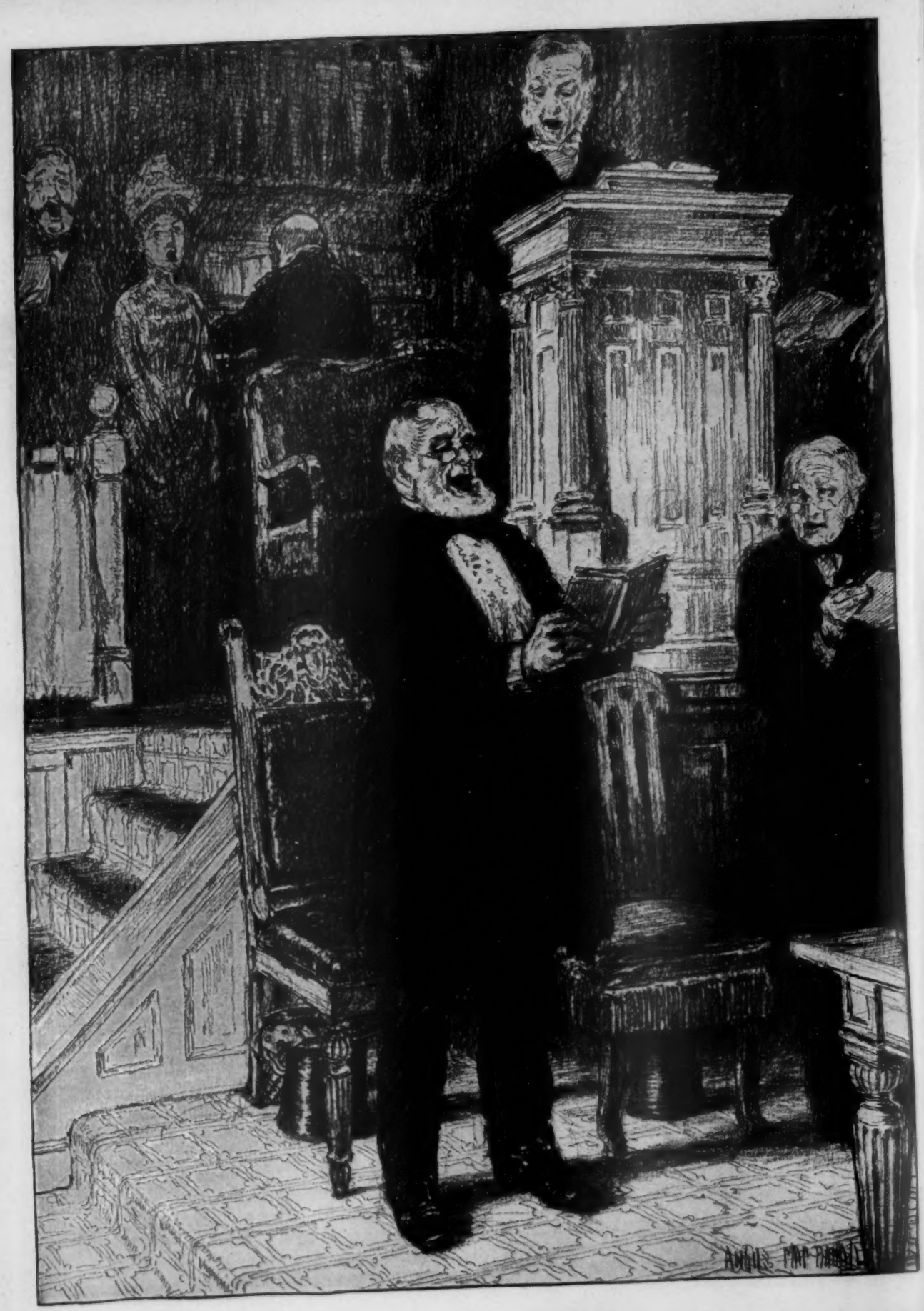
And this fact is brought home to us with irresistible conviction, because a baby is

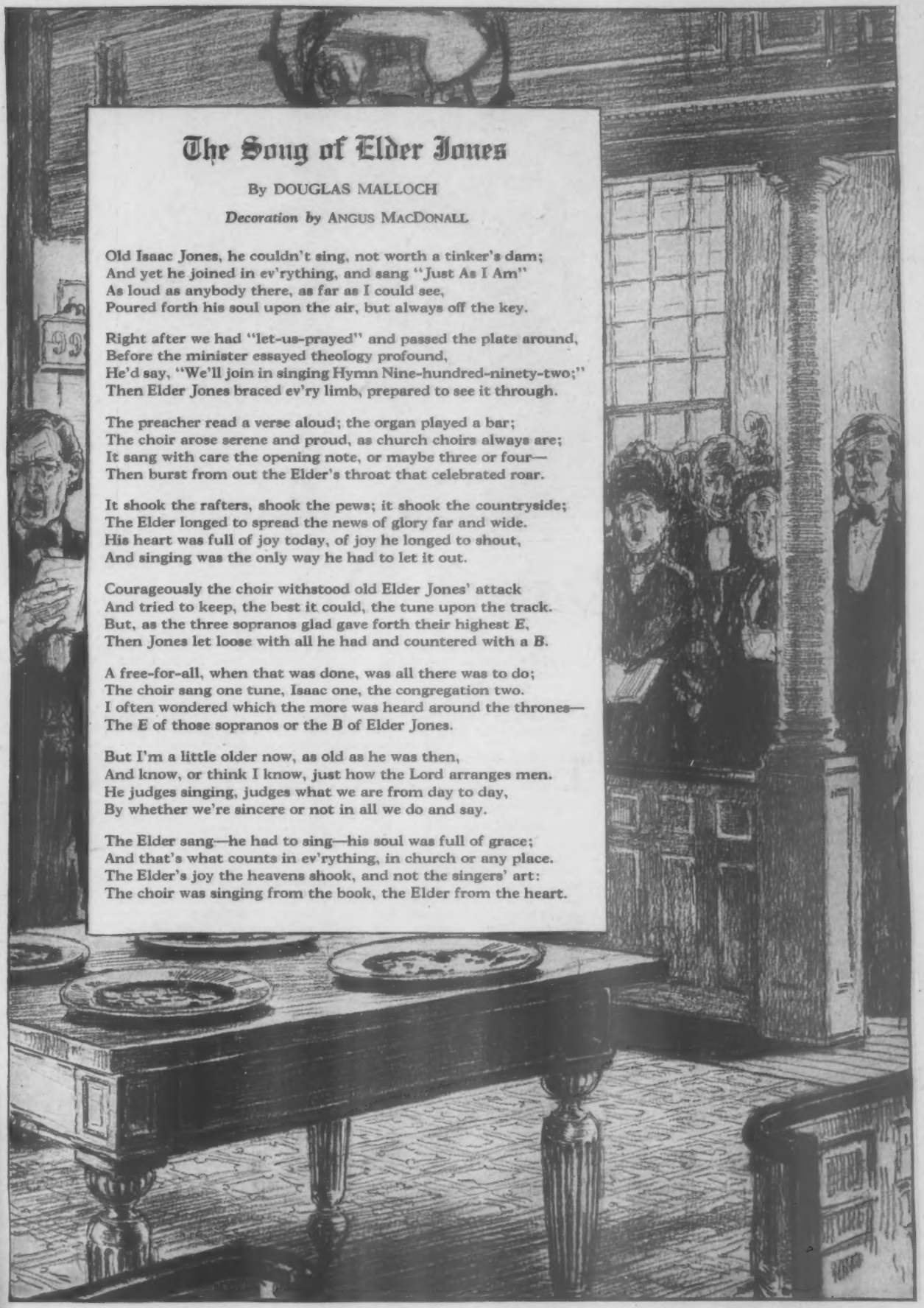
such an intensely material thing, apparently a little animal caring for nothing but food and sleep.

Yet it is through the baby everywhere that parent-lovers come at first to realize their spiritual love for each other. Before the baby comes, they are under the roseate spell of a material love that, without their realizing it, renders them unconsciously selfish. For when we first love, we are absorbed in the contemplation of our own aspirations and longings, which become visualized for us by the presence of another. Thus we love that within ourselves which responds to this magic contact. It is only when we are called upon to make a sacrifice that we awaken to the fact that love is something deeper than flesh and blood, that it reaches up into the skies, that it is a spiritual affair. Thus, "whether where equinoctial fervors glow, or winter wraps the polar world in snow," the light that lies in the eyes of all mothers is the same light.

And this is what the baby does for us.

Everything is comprehended in this mystery, because the baby is the most perfect meeting-ground between the material and spiritual. The artist may extol Art; the author may proclaim the excellence of Literature; the musician may sound the supremacy of Harmony: but Art and Culture, Intellect and Achievement, all bow before this shrine. Two parent-lovers have got something on all the rest of the world. For the first time, Love speaks to them in terms of the *spiritual*.





The Song of Elder Jones

By DOUGLAS MALLOCH

Decoration by ANGUS MACDONALL

Old Isaac Jones, he couldn't sing, not worth a tinker's dam;
And yet he joined in ev'rything, and sang "Just As I Am"
As loud as anybody there, as far as I could see,
Poured forth his soul upon the air, but always off the key.

Right after we had "let-us-prayed" and passed the plate around,
Before the minister essayed theology profound,
He'd say, "We'll join in singing Hymn Nine-hundred-ninety-two;"
Then Elder Jones braced ev'ry limb, prepared to see it through.

The preacher read a verse aloud; the organ played a bar;
The choir arose serene and proud, as church choirs always are;
It sang with care the opening note, or maybe three or four—
Then burst from out the Elder's throat that celebrated roar.

It shook the rafters, shook the pews; it shook the countryside;
The Elder longed to spread the news of glory far and wide.
His heart was full of joy today, of joy he longed to shout,
And singing was the only way he had to let it out.

Courageously the choir withstood old Elder Jones' attack
And tried to keep, the best it could, the tune upon the track.
But, as the three sopranos glad gave forth their highest *E*,
Then Jones let loose with all he had and countered with a *B*.

A free-for-all, when that was done, was all there was to do;
The choir sang one tune, Isaac one, the congregation two.
I often wondered which the more was heard around the thrones—
The *E* of those sopranos or the *B* of Elder Jones.

But I'm a little older now, as old as he was then,
And know, or think I know, just how the Lord arranges men.
He judges singing, judges what we are from day to day,
By whether we're sincere or not in all we do and say.

The Elder sang—he had to sing—his soul was full of grace;
And that's what counts in ev'rything, in church or any place.
The Elder's joy the heavens shook, and not the singers' art:
The choir was singing from the book, the Elder from the heart.

Not a Day Older

FORTUNATE is the wife and mother whose youthful appearance evokes this compliment on the day of her china wedding. Yet the most famous beauties of history beginning with Cleopatra, were most admired when, from the standpoint of years, they were no longer young.

This gift of eternal youth depends upon one attraction — a fresh, smooth skin: "Keep your school-girl complexion" and you can ignore the passing years.

How to keep it

Very easily, as you can quickly prove. The secret lies in thorough cleansing, once a day, of the minute skin pores which compose the surface of the skin.

For these minute pores have a most important function, they provide the skin with the natural oil which keeps it smooth and soft. But when this natural beautifying skin oil is allowed to accumulate, when dirt and perspiration are allowed to collect in the pores, serious clogging is the result.

Unless all dangerous accumulations are carefully removed, you will soon be wondering why your complexion looks so coarse. The appearance of blackheads and blemishes complete the disfigurement.

Before you resort to the harsh methods which may roughen and toughen the delicate texture of the skin, try this simple but effective method of beautifying.

Get a cake of Palmolive Soap, mildest and most soothing of all facial soaps. Massage the profuse, creamy lather gently into your skin, using your two hands. Rinse carefully and use a fine soft towel for drying.

If your skin is very dry, apply a little cold cream. Normally oily skins won't need it. Do this just before bedtime and you lay the foundation for a fine real beauty sleep. In the morning your mirror will compliment you by reflecting a freshened beautified complexion.

Palm and olive oils

Palmolive Soap is the modern scientific blend of the same palm and olive oils which were the favorite cleansers in the days of ancient Egypt. Modern progress has perfected their combination, but they have remained the ideal soap ingredients for three thousand years.

If Palmolive were made in small quantities it would cost at least 25c a cake. World-wide popularity keeps the Palmolive factories working day and night. This reduces the cost to 10c a cake.

Why Palmolive is Green

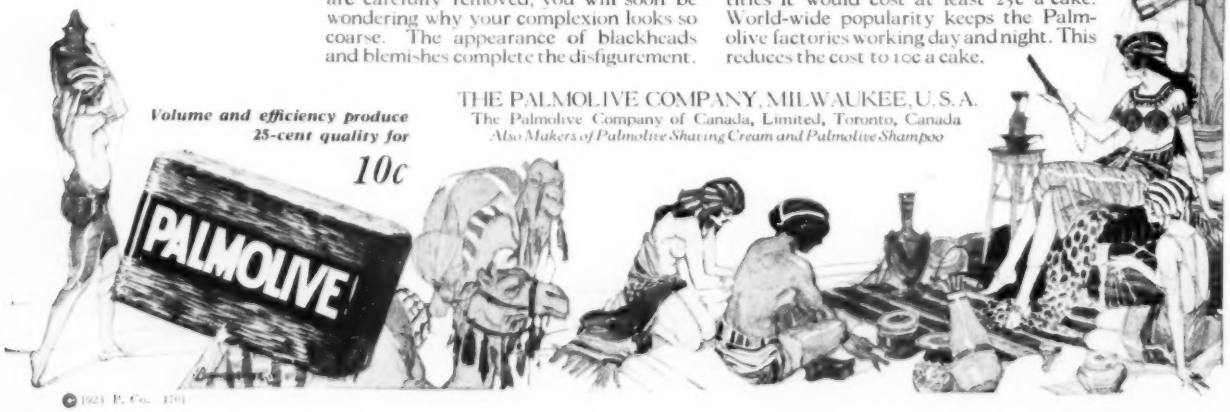
Because the rich, natural color of these rare oriental oils from which it is blended, naturally impart their color as well as their quality to the fragrant green cake.

The soft moss tint is nature's own — just as is the color of grass and foliage. Thus there is no need for artificial coloring. Nature does it for us.

Palm and Olive oils — nothing else — give nature's green color to Palmolive Soap

Volume and efficiency produce 25-cent quality for

10c



THE PALMOLIVE COMPANY, MILWAUKEE, U.S.A.
The Palmolive Company of Canada, Limited, Toronto, Canada
Also Makers of Palmolive Shaving Cream and Palmolive Shampoo

The Magazine of a Remade World

What, Another Holiday?

A Common-sense Editorial by

BRUCE BARTON

WITH Mother's Day, Father's Day, and all the rest, it requires a good deal of temerity to suggest another holiday.

Yet I make bold to propose Grandfather's Day, to be celebrated in the following manner:

Each citizen to provide himself with a jackknife, a pine board and a corncob pipe, and spend the day in whittling and *in thought.*

It is impossible to exaggerate the good that might come from such a day, faithfully observed around the world.

Look at the front page of the morning paper; what a feverish panorama it unfolds! We rush into conferences and rush out again; we legislate; we strike; we resolve and denounce; we are all perfectly sure that we want something, but *what* we want we have no clear idea, because we have never stopped long enough to *think.*

Some years ago an eminent Hindoo visited our shores. Said he: "I do not see how it is possible for you to live as you do, without a single moment of your day deliberately given to tranquillity and meditation. It is an inevitable part of our Hindoo life to retire for at least half an hour daily into silence, to relax our muscles, govern our breathing and meditate on eternal things."

The Hindoos may not have progressed mechanically so fast as we, but they have some perspective on life, some inner sense of what it is all about. In that respect our men of vision have resembled them.

Give such men full credit for talent, hard work, energy and all the rest—there still remains a deeper, more subtle source of power. Somewhere, inside themselves, they have a secret place to which they can retire, there to take stock of their resources, revise their aims, relocate their goals and correct their point of view on men and events.

Such a service of revisions and corrections Grandfather's Day might do for us; it would exercise us at least once a year in the wholesome experience of doing a little silent thinking *on our own account.*

St. Francis of Assisi, buried in thought, walked all day along the borders of a beautiful lake. As his companions were conversing that night, he heard one of them mention the lake.

"*What lake?*" inquired St. Francis.

Every day was Grandfather's Day to him. Which is one of the reasons why he was St. Francis.

Habutai Silk Laundered 37 times—still white!

*

The owner of this beautiful tailored blouse attributes her remarkable success to the exclusive use of Ivory Flakes. "A blouse of this material is usually difficult to keep white," says her letter. But after 37 washings with Ivory Flakes it is, as she says, "still white."

(This blouse and its owner's letter are on file for inspection in the Procter & Gamble office.)

Canton Crêpe?

Careful! First consider this test for laundering safety

Is there in your wardrobe a particularly precious and costly blouse of sheer silk—perhaps embroidered, perhaps trimmed with filmy chiffon—which you have never been willing to trust to soap and water?

It would probably stand clear water, but—the *soap!*

Think! There *must* be a soap in some form, white, mild and gentle enough for such a garment. But how can soaps be *tested—before* you actually imperil a garment of such value?

Here is the test:

Ask yourself this question:

"Would I be willing to use the soap on my face?"

Consider in this way all soaps in any form offered for delicate garments—your confident choice will almost inevitably rest with Ivory Flakes. For Ivory Flakes is simply Ivory Soap—flaked petal-thin for gentle washbowl laundering of the most delicate fabrics ever woven.

Ivory Soap is the chosen soap of millions of women for their *skin.* Its purity, mildness and whiteness have been known and trusted for forty-four years. No wonder, then, that Ivory Flakes passes the face-test with highest honors.

When you wash the less delicate textiles of your household, you may use Ivory Flakes because it is *economical.* But when, with infinite care, you launder those exceedingly *precious* things so dear to your heart, use Ivory Flakes because it is *safe!*

We shall be glad to have you try Ivory Flakes at our expense. Just follow the directions in the lower left-hand corner.

PROCTER & GAMBLE

FREE

This package and booklet

A sample package of Ivory Flakes and the beautifully illustrated booklet, "The Care of Lovely Garments," will be sent to you without charge on application to Section 28-BF, Dept. of Home Economics, The Procter & Gamble Co., Cincinnati, O.

IVORY SOAP FLAKES

Makes dainty clothes last longer

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 1923. VOL. XL, NUMBER 4 KARL EDWIN HARRIMAN, *Editor*

MARY SYNON

The author of many well-remembered Red Book stories here contributes her most appealing work, a three-part novel of exceptional charm and power.

The Sand Pile

Illustrated by Gayle Hoskins

VIRGIL showed to Dante, and Dante held before the world, that stone on which is written the truth which Tom Mercer began to live on the day when he went to prison for the murder of Jere Conners.

From the doorway of the great grim gray-stoned, turreted fortress of the State penitentiary, before ever the gate of the inner yard clanged the last knell of his freedom, he saw Torrens in the Warden's chair, and with the despair of an overburdened journeyer come to the edge of a precipice, he threw away the pack of courage that Winnie Mercer had set on his back when she bade him good-by. For Torrens, despot of the destinies of the men whom the law gave into his keeping, had loved Winnie Kenly before Tom Mercer had even met her, and Jim Torrens was not the man to forgive the other whom Winnie had married. Mercer, knowing now the worst of his fate,—as he had not guessed it when twelve of his peers in the little mining-town of his birth, his many struggles, his boyhood's loneliness, and his manhood's one great joy, had found him guilty,—clenched his chained hands as he stared at the man whose presence closed to him the last door of hope.

Torrens, writing at the big mahogany desk in the room beyond the entrance-hall, looked up to meet Tom Mercer's stare of fearing hatred. He put down his pen slowly, and nodded to the old man in bluish-gray who waited his every gesture. The old man moved close to the Warden's desk, bent over in listening attention, then turned and came noiselessly out to Mercer. "He wants you," he said, his pale old eyes gleaming with a curiosity which suggested the extraordinary character of Torrens' command. Mercer stood hesitant an instant, forgetful of his need of obedience until the look on the old convict's face brought back to him recollection of his peonage to authority's beckoning. Tremblingly, but with his head flung back and his teeth biting into his lower lip, he followed the messenger.

UNDER the long, slow gaze which the Warden gave him, his heart tightened, then raced into a pounding which drummed his ears. Always, in the presence of men endowed with the gifts he lacked,—education, power, poise,—he had felt the surge of humiliation sweeping him up into anger; but never before had he tasted the sting of the salt in the wave as now while Torrens appraised him. For Torrens' eyes plumbed the ocean of his manhood, seeking in Winnie Mercer's husband some depth they were not finding. Not alone the convict of today, but the Mercer of the yesterdays the man in the chair found wanting; and not merely at the bonds on his wrists but at the shackles of his life Mercer cursed in silence as Torrens spoke.

"Surprised to see me here, Mercer? Thought I was still at Chester, I suppose? Well, the governor sent me here a week ago today. We'll be together for some time, no doubt." He scanned the commitment papers which his deputy had taken from the sheriff who had brought Mercer. "'Fourteen years,'" he read. "That's a long time to pay for the privilege of ridding the earth of Jere Conners. Why did you kill him?"

"He stole from me."

"He stole from everybody."

"But he stole the money we'd all saved in the building-and-loan association." He hated himself for giving Torrens even this hint of what he believed his justification of the hot-headed deed, but the need of setting himself right with this man drove him on. "I was saving to pay for the house for Winnie and the boy. He took everybody's money, and he laughed when I went to him to ask for a chance to hold the place till I could get going again. He laughed when he rode by in his automobile the day we were put out on the street. And I—I killed him."

"Huh!" Torrens thrust out his lower jaw. "Where's Winnie?"

"Back home."

"What's she going to do?"

"She's going to work."

"There's no work for a woman of Winnie's sort there."

"She aint going to stay there."

"Where's she going?"

Mercer paused. Why should he tell Torrens of their plans? Wouldn't he only strive to thwart them? But the sight of a bundle of letters on the Warden's desk recalled to him the futility of trying to keep the truth from this man who stood at the pass to the world outside. "She's coming to this place," he said doggedly.

"Here?" Torrens' eyes narrowed. "Why?"

"She can get work at typewriting in the steel-mills. That'll take care of her and Buddy, and she can come to see me every visiting day." He flung out the words almost exultantly, sensing that the thought of Winnie's willingness to come to her convict husband would hurt this other man who had loved her. When he saw the twitching of nerves around the Warden's mouth he knew that he had been right.

"Her right to visit you will depend upon your own good conduct," Torrens said sullenly.

"I know that."

"Will you remember it?"

"Of course."

"I'm not so sure. You didn't remember her when you shot Jere Conners, did you?"

"It was for her and Buddy I done it. What'd I care about money if it wasn't for them?"

"How old is the boy, Mercer?"

"Buddy's nearly seven."

"And he'll be nearly twenty-one when you get out, not a boy any more. You'll miss all those years of him that would have been yours. Was Jere Conners worth that?"

"I didn't think—"

"None of you do." Torrens turned to the old man. "Tell Phillips to put Mercer in the chair-shops," he said. He nodded curt dismissal of both of them as the telephone rang.

THE old man closed the door of Torrens' office, and for the moment when the two of them were alone, he touched Mercer's arm and spoke. "I'm in for life," he said in a quavering whisper. "They sent me down for killing a man. I never did it, but no one believed me. You believe me, don't you?" He peered at Mercer with the wistfulness of the old and lonely.

"Sure," Mercer said, too immersed in his own bitterness to heed more than the plea for some kind of reassurance.

"You've only the one little boy?"

"Just Buddy."

"And he'll come to see you sometimes?"

"Yes."

"That'll be nice," said the old man. "They don't bring children here often, but I'm always glad to see them when they come. I'm the office messenger. You see I was never married," he added. "Sometimes I'm glad, but sometimes—" His loquacity halted sharply, and he led Mercer across the entrance hall to the prison filing-clerk's office. There he mumbled his message to the burly-necked deputy who had met Mercer at the door, and without a backward glance, slid soundlessly away.

For minutes which seemed hours Tom Mercer endured the pitiless cross-examination of the system which put him, a casual in crime, through the paces of criminal branding. With every fiber of his outdoor-bred body and mind rebelling against the probing, he passed through the process in an ever-rising resentment which struck fire when the clerk bade him write his name at the foot of the long sheet. "I wont," he said.

"Here!" The clerk's finger pointed.

"Sign it," the deputy snarled.

Mercer stood motionless.

"We'll see that you do," the deputy declared ominously.

"You'd better sign," said the pale clerk.

"I—I can't," Mercer muttered, driven to confession by the clerk's anxious tone rather than by the officer's threat. "I never went to school." The clerk nodded understandingly, and wrote the name for him. "Put your mark here," he said kindly. Mercer set down the "X." "You're Number 1728," he told him. He turned to the deputy. "Take him to Phillips for the chair-shops," he echoed the Warden's order. The deputy unlocked the gate to the inner yard, and Tom Mercer passed under its arch. The door swung shut with a click which seemed to him the dropping of the lock of doom. He looked over his shoulder, and saw Torrens standing in the entrance-hall, his shadow lying between the man within and the sunshine of the freedom he had lost.

That night, in the silence of his cell on the upper tier, he tried to win back the talismanic courage which Winnie had sought to make certain for him, but even the picture of his wife eluded him so harrowingly that he had to go back to the beginning of his memory of her to see her at all. Then, bright-haired, girlish, gay, she had seemed as remote from him as was the thought of her now.

WINNIE'S father, the bookkeeper at the Snellington mines, had brought her from the East, where she had been living with the parents of her dead mother. Jim Torrens, attorney for the mines,—dominating Peachtree Valley by reason of his ambitions no less than because of his position,—had appropriated her for "his girl." That she would marry him everyone—except perhaps Winnie Kenly herself—took for granted until that terrible time when the Valley had been swept by the disaster which entombed hundreds of the coal-miners. Somewhere in the rescue work, where he saved so many men, Tom Mercer met Winnie Kenly. Afterwards they knew that they had loved each other in the moment of that meeting, and nothing—not the cold anger of Torrens, the grief of Winnie's father, the amazement of the town that a girl like Winnie, educated far beyond the women of the miners, should care for Tom Mercer, ignorant, passionate, wild as he was,—could keep them apart. They were married in the time of the blossoms; and Torrens, in the silent bitterness of a man who is jilted for another, inferior to him in every material way of life, rode off on the first steed of chance that was passing. That it took him into politics and prison-administration had meant nothing to Tom Mercer then.

The years between—until Jere Conners came to blight them—had been too busy, too happy for either of the Mercers to give thought to the other man who had loved Winnie. They had been poor, for Mercer earned their daily bread by the labor of his hands in the mines; but they were growing less poor every day,

"I don't see how I can let you go again," came the thought, tinctured by the realization that their meeting must be all too brief.

and even out of poverty Winnie Mercer made a game that was a joy to play. No other woman in the town—and Peachtree Valley had its heroines of struggle quite as valiant as those of other places—was as blithe and cheerful and hopeful as she. Only one cloud hung on the horizon of her happiness. She wanted for Tom advancement beyond his possibility unless he studied. It was not that she herself felt any breach between them in the book-training which she possessed and he lacked, but she had lived in a world where it was the ladder, and she yearned for him to own one for his climbing. "Please let me teach you," she begged him in the first year of their marriage.

"What's the use?" he would say. "Don't I make more money now than the white-collared men in the office?"

"But you could make more than you do now, if only—"

He kissed her pleading into silence.

"It's too late to learn," he would declare; and out of her pity for that miserable, orphaned childhood when he had been knocked from pillar to post, too busy struggling for food for his body to dare seek food for his mind, she desisted from her desire to spur him into study. Too often he came home so pathetically weary that she could only yearn to give him rest; and so Tom Mercer went on signing his mark, while Jim Torrens was climbing his own ladder of advancement by the rungs of his work in prison-management.

CONTINUALLY the thoughts of the man in the cell brought him back to the knowledge that Torrens, hating him, stood now between him and the freedom which Winnie had been so sure that she could in time secure for him. Her hope had borne him through the gloomy days that came between the unexpected verdict and their parting. Her certainty of her ability to make the Board of Pardons see, one day, how unjust had been the sentence, had buoyed him until that moment when he had seen Torrens. Now he knew how futile had been their hope, how childish their plan. His soul sank into a quagmire of despair as he thought of the woman and the boy whom his hour of wild rage had flung away from him. Over and over, in a passion of longing and remorse, he spoke their names while he drove his nails into the palms of his hands until the blood came. The dun dawn of morning found him spent in sorrow. Not the Tom Mercer of Winnie Kenly's love, but a shell of his body, casketing a deadened spirit, went with seventeen hundred other wards of the State through the motions of living on that day and for many a long day that followed.

The first break in the gray monotony came to him with a letter from Winnie. Torrens summoned him into the prison office to give it to him, and he noted with surprise that it had not been opened. "I can trust Winnie," the Warden said, and Mercer felt the implication of distrust in himself like a lash upon his shoulders. He took the letter, staring at it in dumb desire. Winnie had told him that she would write whenever the regulations permitted, and he had grasped at the thought, neither of them considering for the moment that he was unable to read what she would write. Torrens must have seen the longing in his eyes, for he said: "Want an interpreter? You can have Philo, here." He nodded toward the old man, and he came from his corner where he always seemed to stay like a fixture. "You don't mind me doing it?" he whispered to Mercer. "I do it for all the boys who can't. Some of them don't see very well." He spoke with apologetic eagerness as he opened Winnie's letter.

" T wont be long, Tom dear," she had written, "until Buddy and I will be coming to see you. I've brushed up my stenography so that I'm not afraid of it, and the superintendent of employment in the steel-mills has written me that my recommendations will place me as soon as I can come. They are short of help, I hear. I've settled almost everything, and I'm as eager as Buddy to hit the trail. So don't get downhearted, man of mine. The worst of it will be over when you know that somewhere in the same town the two of us will be waiting for you.

"Buddy seems to think you're held by a wicked ogre in a feudal castle, and he's full of plans to rescue you. I thought he was past the age of fairy-tales, but he's the Jack of the Beanstalk these nights, and after all, Jack *did* get to the top, didn't he? Perhaps Bud'll beat me there.

"There's only one thing I ask of you, Tom darling: don't give up hope until we come. Night after night I have the feeling that you have thrown up your hands. You mustn't, dear-heart. You promised me you wouldn't. We both of us know how unjust it all has been, and we both of us know that injustices can't hold forever. What was the message the old general at Kenesaw Mountain sent to Sherman when Sherman told him to hold the fort, for he was coming? 'I'll hold it till hell freezes over,' didn't he say? Wont you hold too? For your own sake, and for Buddy, and for me?"

The old voice quavered over the last page, and Mercer saw the tears in Philo's eyes as the old man handed back to him the letter. "I think," he said, "that I'd hold for a long time after the freeze if a woman ever thought about me like what your wife thinks of you." But Mercer was looking at Torrens, who wrote on in apparent obliviousness of them. "She don't know yet what I'm up against," he said.

"You mean him?" Philo's lips formed the words, though no sound came, and with the acquired learning of the prisoner, Mercer understood.

As if he realized that they spoke of him, Torrens turned his gaze toward the two men. He scanned Mercer with the cool scrutiny of his authority until Tom reddened beneath the insolence, conscious or otherwise, of the stare. "Come here," the Warden bade him, and he drew his lagging steps across the carpet. "How do you like the chair-shop?" Torrens demanded.

"Doesn't matter whether I like it or not, does it?" Mercer sneered.

Torrens continued to watch him reflectively. "Your record," he said, "shows that you can't read nor write. Don't you want to learn?"

"No," he said sullenly.

"It's not a bad thing to know."

It was the very intensity of Mercer's desire to know which barbed his speech now. Because he was aching with the wish to write Winnie an answer to her message, because he knew how study would break the terrible monotony of the days, because he was beginning to understand the value of the three R's as tools, he told himself now that his pride forbade acceptance of anything from the Warden. "I guess I can go the rest of the way without it," he drawled. "I've got a good many things already that men with education couldn't."

"Just as you like," Torrens snapped, his face reddening under the taunt. He motioned to Philo, and the old man led Tom from the office.

"You shouldn't have refused," he whispered. "He could have made it easy for you. Now he'll make it hard."

"It can't be any harder than it is," Mercer snarled.

HE entered into knowledge, however, that his life could be made doubly hard as the days wore onward. Having no standards of comparison, he had not known of the privileges which Torrens had allowed him until they were taken away from him. Too late, he realized that Torrens had given him every favor possible to a new prisoner. He had, without test, been made an honor man. Now, held to labor of a kind he hated, kept to an indoors he loathed, he fell into a melancholy which brooded over the handicaps of his life until he seemed to himself the victim of a pursuing malignity, with Torrens its final lash.

"I never had a man's chance," he told himself in the bitterness of total failure. "And now, because I am what I am, Buddy'll never have a man's chance, no matter how hard Winnie tries." Day after day, and week after week, he drifted farther down the stream of despair. He came to its rapids when the deputy brought to him Torrens' order to change his work from the chair-shop to the wall.

Had the message come in any other way than as a command from the man he believed his enemy, Mercer might have welcomed the thought of the shift in work. The building of the new prison wall called for manual labor of the hardest kind, and a transfer to it was regarded by most of the convicts as purgatorial punishment, but Tom Mercer was too accustomed to hard work, too eager to get out in the open, to have seen in it anything but a boon, had he not felt that it was another stripe upon his back. He became sure that Torrens had given the command only for his further humiliation, and he went to work on the masonry without one thrill of joy in the blue skies of summer, with no conscious pleasure in the sunshined air. Tom Mercer, piling brick on brick, hated everything in his life except the woman and the boy he was losing day by day, but most of all he hated Torrens; and, with the bricks, he piled another wall of vengeful purpose against the man. "I'll get him yet," was his comrading thought.

Because of his obsession he diverted every circumstance into another reason for hating the Warden. He had received no other letter from Winnie, and he decided that Torrens was holding back his communications from his wife. A visiting-day passed without bringing her, and he assured himself that Torrens had forbidden her coming. When old Philo came to work beside him on the wall,

he decided that Torrens had sent the convict as a spy, although the man himself told him, casually enough, that he had asked for the transfer in order to be outdoors. "I aint got much longer to see the sun," he said in the low tone which could escape the hearing of all guards. "And, besides—" He gave his furtive, over-shoulder glance, and said no more.

Not until a man tried to escape from the wall-gang, however, did Tom realize the old man's meaning. Then there rushed over him the thought that he too might get away. Other men had. Why couldn't he? Torrens would have him more closely watched than the others, of course, but there was always the chance. It was as he watched for it that he first saw the sand pile.

HUNDREDS of feet down the wall from the turn which he and old Philo had taken in advance of the slower teams, it gleamed golden in the sun. Flung beside the wall merely to make easier the mixing of the concrete for the structure, it might have been a Midas symbol to a poet; but to Tom Mercer it brought the first ray of hope that he had known since the day he had come to prison. For there flashed upon him the sudden thought that somewhere out of it might come the means that would free him from bondage—free him from Torrens. Beyond the actual fact of escape he refused to think. He would get away, he told himself with grim exultation, and that pile of yellow sand would somehow help him. Impulsively he turned to Philo, but the fear of the old man's spying halted him as he started to speak. He caught the gleam in Philo's eyes, however; they gazed toward the sand, and he wondered if the other man had realized his intention or if he had himself formulated a plan of escape. Even if he were the Warden's agent, he might yet desire freedom.

"Do you see the little boy up there?" the old man asked now.

Mercer pulled down his cap to shield his eyes, and squinted toward the sand to which Philo was pointing. In the glare he could see only a little dark figure against the glint of the pile, but something of its contour set his heart beating wildly, so vividly did it remind him of the boy from whom he had been dragged away.

"He's been coming for three days," Philo said. "He plays all by himself. Maybe we'll be up there near him soon. I'd like to see him, wouldn't you? It's been a long time since I saw a little boy," he added, as if to explain his wish. Against Mercer's silence, not knowing it the high tide of emotion, he went on: "Would your little boy be anything like him?"

He sought to set the file biting into the steel bars, but the sound of its snarling seemed too startlingly loud to permit its continuance.

"He—he looks like him from here," he managed to stammer.

"Do you think that maybe—" The old eyes peered hopefully down the line of sunlight.

"I don't think anything," Mercer said gruffly, but his own eyes kept turning from the bricks under his hands to the darker heap in the sand pile. Without words he communicated his speed of work to Philo so that the two of them were far in advance of the others; but long before the end of their labors came, and long before they had come within a distance from which he might be certain, Tom Mercer saw the child rise from the sand, take up some discarded toy, and run off swiftly toward a huddle of houses at the edge of the town. "But maybe he'll be there again tomorrow," old Philo said, and he knew the thought for comfort.

ALL that night Mercer lay awake, weary as he was from bodily toil, in the wonder if the boy could be Buddy. Why not, he asked himself, remembering every phrase of Winnie's letter. She would have come to the town by this time, he felt sure. It was natural that she should find a place to live near the steel-mills, and that would be near the prison too. Buddy would be playing alone. He wouldn't be here long enough to know any other boys. And besides— The thought of his son's ostracism choked him. Why should Buddy be punished for what his father had done? And yet weren't the Buddys of the world always being punished for their fathers' deeds? Wasn't it the Winnies and the Buddys who suffered most? Why hadn't he thought of them before he had gone after Jere Conners? Why hadn't he thought then that the loss of money was such a little thing compared to the loss of freedom? The Warden's words, "None of you ever do think," came back to him, and the acid of their truth opened once more the wound of his hatred of Torrens. Well, he'd show him! He'd get away, and Winnie and Buddy would come to him; and somewhere, somehow, the three of them would start a new life. And he fell, at dawn, into a restless doze in which he dreamed that the sand pile had risen into a mountain which he was seeking to climb. He awoke, calling for Buddy. For the first time in his life Tom Mercer found tears on his cheeks.

In the morning, too tired to keep his pace, he had no incentive of seeing the child. "He comes in the afternoon," Philo said. "Let's keep ahead." The old man's belief spurred him, and since the guard trusted Philo, their speed went unnoticed. Noon passed, however, and the sun seemed well past the zenith, when the little figure came swinging over the lots from the houses beyond and made for the pile in the lee of the wall. "He—he walks like Buddy," Mercer said.

He crept along the wall as far as he dared, lying flat as he peered down at the child beside the gleaming sand. "Buddy," he called, but the child never ceased from his play, and his heart sank back into wretchedness. Of course it wouldn't be Buddy! That had been too much to hope. And yet there was something in the stoop of his shoulders over his building that was so like Buddy that hope came back to life once more in the man's soul.

"Buddy!" He dared call no louder, but he whistled the notes with which he had been wont to call the dog that had been his boy's. The whistle carried as the name had not. Swiftly the boy on the pile looked around. Again Mercer whistled. The boy rose from his knees, gazing upward, striving to locate the sound. A third time the man on the wall pursed his lips. Then, flinging his arms out in that gesture which no one but Buddy had ever shown to him, the boy rushed back from the sand toward the point where Tom Mercer lay, his blood throbbing in a wild madness.

Under the wall he paused, a bewildered but brave little chap, fearful even in his hope, but pitifully eager. "Oh, Daddy!" he called. "Daddy, I didn't know you were so near me. Come down here. I want to talk to you. Oh, Daddy!"

CAUTIOUSLY Mercer looked back toward the turn in the wall. Old Philo had crept near, and lay palpitant with excitement. "Can't you get down?" he urged. "He can't come up."

"I can drop down," Mercer said, "but I can't get out there in the open without being seen, and I couldn't climb up again." His eyes yearned toward Buddy, just below.

"I can't climb up there," the boy said, "but I must see you. Oh, come down!"

"Crawl up the pile," old Philo advised. "You can drop into that easier, and it'll be easier to come back. Here's something." From somewhere beneath his worn suit of blue-gray he drew out a parcel which he shoved toward Mercer. "I've been making it for nearly thirty years," he said. "It ought to be good."

It was a ladder, made strong by tens of thousands of knots, and woven from the odds and ends of tens of thousands of pieces of string. For their gathering he had served warden after warden. For its making he had spent years of sleepless nights, to the end that on some other night he might make that break toward freedom that every lifer plans. Now, with a nonchalance any cavalier might envy, he was trusting it to Tom Mercer, that the other man might go down to his boy and be assured of safety from detection in his return. "I'll watch," was all he said, and Mercer could only nod him gratitude as he crept along the wall, with Buddy running below him. Just above the sand pile he took a last glance backward, then, at a nod from Philo, dropped.

THERE, in the shadow, he caught the boy up to him in a joy whose passion was intensified by his sorrows. "Oh, Buddy, Buddy!" was all that he could say, but into his child's name he put all the love and the longing, the remorse and the loneliness of his days. As manna from heaven the boy's "Oh, Daddy!" fell on his starving spirit. "I don't see how I can ever let you go again," came the thought, tinctured by the realization that their meeting must be all too brief. And even as he feared, the parting came. Old Philo bent over the wall with sibilant warning. "Fling up that ladder," he ordered, catching it deftly and fastening it to a spike in the concrete work. Hand over hand Mercer ascended, while Buddy watched breathlessly. "Good-by," he called when Mercer had reached the top. "I'll come back tomorrow."

"Good-by," Mercer called back, and watched him until he had gone from sight.

"He's a nice little boy," old Philo said.

Tom Mercer did not answer. He lay sprawled on the top of the wall. The old man moved nearer to him. "He's coming again tomorrow," he sought to soothe him, but the sobs tore in the other man's throat. For it was the knowledge that tomorrow and on all the other morrows his son would see him in the shackles of degradation which had broken the last barrier of his grief. Buddy didn't understand now, although he knew that some disaster had befallen them; but the day would come when he would understand it all, and it was in the fear of that day that his father had given way. Curiously Philo watched him. At last he spoke again. "If I had a little boy like that," he said, "I'd walk through hell to get back to him."

"How can I?" Mercer cried.

"I'd find a way," Philo said.

With some vague idea of showing the way, he might have slowed the pace in the work, for the next day found them but little advanced from their post of the day before. The guard, accustomed to convict vagaries, hardly noted their slackening, and the afternoon kept them in easy range of the pile. Buddy, coming earlier, saw his father slip down from the wall. Mercer was waiting for him at the sand heap when he paused, breathing hard from his running. "I told Mummy you were here," he said, flinging himself down beside his father.

"What did she say?"

"She said to give you her love, and to tell you to—to—" He groped for the message.

"To come to see her?"

"No, that wasn't it. To—to sit tight. That's it."

"Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes." He looked up at old Philo, who was peering down at them. "Who's he?" the child inquired.

"A friend of mine."

"Mummy's my friend."

"She sure is."

"She teaches me."

"Does she?"

"Yes. It's vacation-time now, so I couldn't go to school anyhow. She shows me when she comes home from work, how to read and write and spell and everything."

"What do you read?"

"Lots of things. She's reading me a book about a man with a stick who's climbing a road with a lot of people. She said he was like you."

"Like me?"

"His name is Christian, and Mummy cries when she reads about him. I'd rather read about Indians, wouldn't you?"

"I don't know."

"Didn't you never read about Indians?"

"No."

With a child's tact he seemed to feel that he had run into a blind alley, and he hastened out to another road. "I can spell my name," he announced proudly. Scrawlingly he set it on the sand. "*thomas mercer jr,*" he wrote. "Now you write yours," he bade his father.

(Continued on page 110)

"Please!" she breathed, and impulsively thrust the message toward him. "I can't open it."

Theme with Variations

By SAMUEL MERWIN

The motion pictures do move—as witness this delightful story by the famous author of "Anthony the Absolute," "The Passionate Pilgrim," "Temperamental Henry," "Goldie Green" and many other novels which have attracted much interest.

Illustrated by R. F. Schabelitz

A MAN with a life to rebuild must be about it. But first he must think. By way of a beginning, Yule turned his back on New York, and at Chicago caught the limited for Los Angeles.

The porter was at work in his compartment. Yule moved listlessly out to the vestibule of the car. Two men were talking earnestly there. One was stout, in a black frock coat and a black string tie and an eighteen-seventy beard, trimmed round, the upper lip shaven: a solidly blocked-in face, with compressed lips and an air of authority. Yule guessed him to be a Protestant bishop.

The other was tall, thin, slightly bent, with gray side-whiskers and bright little eyes. As he talked, he gestured vehemently with a roll of papers.

"It is important, of course, to rouse the church people of California, of the whole country indeed." So ran his earnest speech. "Los Angeles alone can do much. We have the data—" He pronounced it *datta*, and waved the papers. "A thorough moral survey of Hollywood. This Beckingham trial is a mere bubble on the surface. A bubble, no more! And now that the saloon is disposed of, I purpose making this my next great fight. Why, if I were to tell you—"

Yule turned away from this, wandered back through dimly curtained sleepers to the observation-car. Here women were talking, as eagerly.

"In Los Angeles we have settled the whole matter by refusing to receive the movie people at all. We can't allow them in the clubs." This from a middle-aged woman whose mouth drew down into a thin line in a nearly square face.

It sounded like moral snobbery, though doubtless they had a case, these worthy folk. Yule's face set unhappily, and he moved toward the rear platform. Perhaps he would find solitude there, solitude and a sharp evening breeze. He hungered for both. It would be interesting to know in just what category these righteous ones would place him. They would stand violently, doubtless, against divorce —perhaps with an exceptional tolerance in the instance of cer-

She heard him say: "Miss Drew has promised to be my wife." Then—there was a struggle. Those other men came to life.

tain friends where understanding might enter. But *tolerance* would hardly be the watchword.

At the screen door he paused. Four men were volubly talking out there. He hesitated, then went on out and drew a camp-stool into a corner.

One was a magnificent creature in tweeds with a Norfolk cut, and a rolling collar that was open at the neck—hatless, hair pomaded and waved, shining glossily under the dome light—in manner splendidly languid. Another, lolling in a camp-chair under the light, appeared (Yule caught himself staring) to be slightly rouged. He talked with a lisp. Two others, huddled in their chairs, wore caps, and were swarthy, squat men with protruding, beady eyes.

Carelessly at first, Yule listened. They were talking shop. Chatter of this and that picture-lot—grievances against this and that director, sharp criticism, sharper gossip—discussion of new photographic effects, of quarrels, of fabulous salaries, of the proper handling of mob-scenes, of something they called technique and of the vital importance of sound cutting; and they dwelt on the amusingly primitive "old days" of the picture-business not ten years back. They lived, evidently, in a make-believe world that to their excited minds included all of life that could be regarded as worth while.

And then, with the manner of those who drift to familiar and pleasant ground, they talked of women—not quietly, not furtively, not with the reticence common to somewhat civilized men, but with the vital exuberance of ill-bred boys. And they were not boys. Yule listened with incredulous ears. Never had he found himself on so low a plane of animalism. He fell to thinking back, asked himself if ever, even in his Rabelaisian later teens, he could have known such abysmal vulgarity. A certain notorious vamp, Adelaide Something-or-other, was, it transpired, on the train. And so, as well, was Marjorie Drew. They touched differently on her case. She, it appeared, was young and elusive. But for once the dragon mother wasn't along. One of the squat men suggested that the tall hero would find her a quarry worthy of his skill. This was humor. It was odd to reflect that many a man had been shot for speaking less infamously of a woman.

Regarding the Beckingham trial, they were sensitive, resentful of criticism, moved by a primitive herd loyalty. One, in a cap, cried out against reformers, censors, prohibitionists, Puritans in general. The rouged one lisped: "They don't understand Beck'. He's just a great-hearted boy—a cut-up—full of mischief!" And the languid hero with the shining hair inclined his head in accord.

They went in, at last, for liquor and a game of poker.

Yule stared down at the moonlit track as it slipped off, always narrowing, into the night with a rhythmical *clickety-click*. It would be easy to jump down there. Just a momentary yielding to impulse, and then pleasant oblivion. Perhaps pleasant oblivion! Hamlet's soliloquy came to mind, and he smiled grimly. He wouldn't do it, of course. There was something in the mere going on, making some sort of a fight of it. Compensations, mystical perhaps, but real so long as they stayed in mind.

Those picture-men! Perhaps the women from Los Angeles and the professional reformer had a case. The old Roundheads had had a case, of course. Perhaps even the witch-burners had. Still, the American passion for moral regulation got to be a bore at times. The mills of the gods might, after all, be trusted to do a little of their own grinding. The arresting thing was that these picture-folk had a point of view. He'd never thought of that.

The world was flooded with pictures. Come to think of it, somebody must be back of them—enormous energy going out all

the time. Many persons, all sorts perhaps, yet in the main a new sort. Their view couldn't be the familiar one shared by all the workaday folk that transact business and live in neighborhoods and (even yet) go sometimes to church and get families. No, these people lived apart in that queer intense industry of entertaining all the millions of others—an industry that cut obliquely across the more level strata of normal affairs like a huge geological fault. One thought, whimsically, of volcanic origins. It had come so swiftly. The success of it had swept on so far beyond all human experience. Certainly no poet or playwright or painter or singer or actor had ever before so widely touched the world. And these, doubtless, were for the most part youngish folk who had never known that world well.

Yes, they would have a point of view. This immense new force would be at the moment, in their hands, curiously molding the taste of a new age: queer, scheming little fur-men and rag-men and button-men from Lemberg and Kishinev and Ekaterinoslav, salesgirls that happily photographed well, electricians with an inventive gift, ambitious office-boys and dubious beauties from the cities, and proudly resisting actors from New York and Paris and London, and financial adventurers and experimental playwrights and men from the newspapers, and (again) swarming little girls without breeding or morals—men from nowhere who gathered swift, easy millions because they were fat or thin or wall-eyed. Tribute from every continent and every remote island pouring in; a thousand a week to an old actor whose face wrinkled amusingly, five thousand a week to a child of six, ten thousand a week to a girl because she looked like Mary Pickford! Money.....

And here he was on the train to Movieland. He hadn't thought of that when he came aboard. It made the head whirl. And you couldn't patronize or disapprove or dismiss the bewildering fact.

The screen door moved. A slender man in a soft hat dropped down on a chair by the railing and took a pipe from his pocket with a—

"Do you mind?"

"No," said Yule. Then: "I'll smoke my own. I'd forgotten about smoking."

This casual remark, or perhaps his moody way of uttering it, drew a scrutinizing glance from the stranger.

Yule, who was himself at this period all bare nerve-tips, became aware that here was a distinct personality. The man was unobtrusive in dress, manner and speech, yet made himself felt. He carelessly pushed back the soft hat now, and Yule noted a rounding bald forehead, heavy brows above keen hazel eyes, a strongly aquiline nose, curving lines about the corners of the firm, thin mouth, and a narrow chin. It was a thin face, drawn fine; it seemed to carry the marks of courageous, close thinking and, as well, of many periods of intense, merciless work. But there was whimsy in it, a suggestion of dry humor and of imaginative force; and those alert eyes hinted at wit. Something, surely, the man had achieved. He couldn't be a merchant—his authority wasn't that kind, and it was difficult to associate him in any way with the handling or conservation of money, not with that curious hint of fancy showing out guardedly through the eyes and the corners of his mouth. Yule thought of inventing, of engineering.

And then because the man seemed, with all said and done, of a friendly spirit, and because he cared little in any event, Yule spoke his thoughts.

"I've just had my first contact with picture-people."

"Oh, out here?"

"Yes. Depressing. I've lived with soldiers, sailors, lumbermen. But I never met with minds so unspeakably low."

The man smiled. "Must have been that crowd with Gerald Angel."

"If he's the hero, yes."

"He's the hero. I'm in the pictures myself."

Yule considered this. He preferred not to retreat.

"I find most of the pictures I see rather irritating."

"So?"

"It is difficult for an outsider to place the blame for this flood of banality. I suppose it lies, in the main, with the directors."

"I'm a director."

"I don't know of a reason under God's heaven why I should get excited about it. I'm not a reformer. And I don't write scenarios."

The director, in his amusingly quiet way, extended a firm, bony hand. "It's a pleasure to meet you. I supposed everybody wrote them." And he added: "Everybody's excited about it—probably because the pictures are the most exciting thing that's happened, excepting the War."

They were silent for a time, smoking and gazing out down the track. But then Yule found himself unable to resist returning to the attack. Later on, he was to feel some small chagrin over this. The man was right enough; nearly everybody was excited over this immensely vigorous and immensely uncontrollable new industry. Parents fumed; censors snipped; reformers tilted valorously.

"There seems to be a rather bitter feeling in Los Angeles against Hollywood."

The director gave some thought to this. Yule liked the way his face wrinkled down to it.

"I was a charter member and a director," he said at length, "of the Outdoor Life Club in town. A few years ago they passed a by-law excluding all motion-picture people. I resigned, of course. It is doubtless a phase. Hollywood is a confusing place, but very interesting. You'll find it so."

"I have no intention of going there."

"Oh, you will—that is, if you stay at all in the neighborhood."

"I hadn't thought of doing that, even. I,"—Yule hesitated, and his mouth drew down with a touch of bitterness,—"I'm rather set on the mountains. Camping and shooting. What I'm mainly interested in is getting as far away as possible. I've thought of going over the border from San Diego."

Quickly, sympathetically, the director responded with stories of good hunting in the desert mountains. He was, it appeared, a strong outdoor man. His suggestions regarding equipment were shrewd.

But the talk came back to pictures. Yule was by no means sure that he himself hadn't guided it back. The theme was exhibiting an irritating vigor. And that nervous desire to criticize proved compelling. As if, after all, they meant something to him! Or was it that he resented the control of so powerful an instrument by ignoble hands? This latter was what he wished to believe.

"I think," he heard himself saying, "that what annoys me most is the faces on the screen. One sees very few with the slightest spiritual quality."

"Very few. That is one of our difficulties. And when we do find real beauty, the public is likely to pass it by."

"I hadn't thought of that."

"I sometimes ask myself if one reason the pictures excite folks so, isn't that they compel us to face our spiritual limitations as a people. If you were to visit around Hollywood for a time, you'd run into more idealists to the square mile than anywhere else in the world outside Russia. The place is full of dreams. But out yonder is a big public clamoring every minute for sensations and overemphasis and costly vulgarity in sets, and empty-faced little dolls with flaxen hair. The strength of that current is terrific. You see, it costs so much to make a picture. Few men can afford to throw away their own or other people's money in experimenting, so they get into the habit of playing safe. Sure-fire material! And people of course would rather blame us than themselves for the result."

This was surprising, and for the moment, silencing.

"Take my own case." The man's self-absorption was not unpleasant. He meant just what he said. "I'm giving my life to it. My company has made up its mind to stand with me. I have a few real actors and actresses, thoughtful people. My leading lady is not regarded as a beauty on Broadway. I hope one of these days to get hold of a girl of delicacy and fine feeling, some one like Marjorie Drew."

"I understand that she is on the train."

"So? I've never happened to meet her. Some day I shall bring that about. And there's the story-problem. I try to interpret the best novels and plays I can get hold of without doing violence to them. What's the result? Why, the pictures of Eric Van Gilder, who wallows in vulgarity and excess and showmanship, bring in five times what mine do."

He refilled his pipe, and accepted a match.

"Thanks. The fact is, we're all too close to this situation to understand it at all."

Yule found himself nodding in agreement.

"And there's a lot of loose thinking about it. We're making good pictures right now. I've made one or two good pictures myself. Come over to our lot in Hollywood, and I'll show you artists and scholars and poets, camera-men, press-agents, that are bursting with dreams of wonderful things to be done. And I'll show you the finest kind of organization. Morale! Why, we haven't begun. We're just learning our craft, getting ready for the big things—and wrestling along the best we can with that silly public. One of the fascinating things about it is the speed of everything. Conditions change right under your feet. You simply can't keep up with developments.....Here is my card. I'd be glad to give you a glimpse of what's really going on."

YULE gave him his own card, and then looked at the one in his hand. So this remarkably decent chap was no other than David Deane. The name was known to the four corners of the earth.

And then he heard the pleasantly dry voice saying:

"So you're Adrian Yule! I've thought you and I might coöperate some day. I've liked your ideas. Mrs. Deane is fond of your work, too." Then he rose. "It's high time I turned in."

"I envy you," remarked Yule (he must conquer this bitterness). "I don't expect to sleep much myself."

"The fact is,"—thus Deane, then, in parting,—"Hollywood is variously described as a state of nerves, passion's playground, all that sort of drivel. But a thoughtful man comes in time to see that it is really a frontier. Not so different from the California of 'forty-nine! Everybody comes, the wrong people and all. It's a great adventure. It is rough and difficult for a good many individuals. Any number of ignorant little devils with too much easy money. And it goes through phases so rapidly that no mind can quite keep up with it. But the germs of beautiful things are there. Yes, it is a frontier—the frontier of a new art."

He smiled easily, like a man of the world; but Yule caught, as he turned, an earnest light in the hazel eyes.

Then for a long time he sat alone there, lost in a brooding revery, refilling his pipe over and over again, staring down at the ever-narrowing track that slipped so easily into the night with its soothingly rhythmical *clickety-click*. Dimly he was aware when the lights in the observation-room behind him were turned low. The long train would be sleeping now, all the queerly mixed company. The train to Movieland!

Why under God's heaven should he care? What could "the pictures"—he smiled over the phrase—be to him? Why should they even irritate him? What could anything be to him?

The screen door opened. A camp-stool scraped lightly on the platform. There was the soft pleasant sound of rustling silk, and a faint whiff of perfume.

Then a gentle, girlish voice gasped: "Oh! I didn't think—"

HE started nervously, dropping his pipe.

The girl said, in an uneven low voice:

"I didn't think anybody'd be out here this time of night. I couldn't sleep."

He was looking under his chair for the pipe. The girl appeared to be looking too. She seemed a naïve little thing, very young. She added now:

"I'm sorry."

"Here it is," said he, picking it up and knocking it against the railing. Then he rose, in some confusion of mind. An hour earlier he would have dismissed rather angrily the suggestion that any feminine creature could so much as arrest his attention. But the breathless little voice fell wistfully on his ear.

The train was slowing through a city into a station. A brakeman came out and opened a brass gate. Yule moved over there, and through narrowed eyes observed the activities of the division crew with their flaring torches and their hammers.

The brakeman climbed aboard and disappeared within. The train moved, rolled out of the station.

"I'll let you have the platform to yourself," said Yule, in a voice that was gentler than he knew, pausing for a moment to look down at her. "It's a nuisance having strangers about when you want to be alone. I know that feeling so well."

"I couldn't sleep."

"Neither could I."

She turned a fresh if unhappy young face up toward his. "I oughtn't to drive you in like this. I suppose we'd meet—oh, in the dining-car, or somewhere."

"My name is Yule, Adrian Yule."

She stared, more than ever like a child, then murmured, as if awe-struck:

"Oh, you're Mr. Yule!"

This was flattering, really moving. An abrupt leave began to seem almost pleasantly out of the question.

"My name is Marjorie Drew," she said.

"Oh, really!" he heard himself saying, not without a touch of awe like hers. "So you're really Marjorie Drew!"

It was her turn to be pleased. The delicately pretty face naïvely showed it. How little she was! And what a bewildering new turn to the theme that had come in so unexpectedly to fill his mind! This little girl—she couldn't be twenty—was famous. Her name, like David Deane's, was known from Singapore to Buenos Aires. It was incredible. He recalled Deane's remark about Hollywood: "Everybody comes." Here, now, was a wholly new sort! And then, rasping on these brighter thoughts like a file, came a recollection of what the squat man with beady eyes had proposed to the unspeakable Gerald Angel.

The screen door opened. A porter stood there with a yellow envelope.

"Telegram, Miss Drew," he said.

Yule saw the little face work nervously. Her hand fluttered slowly upward.

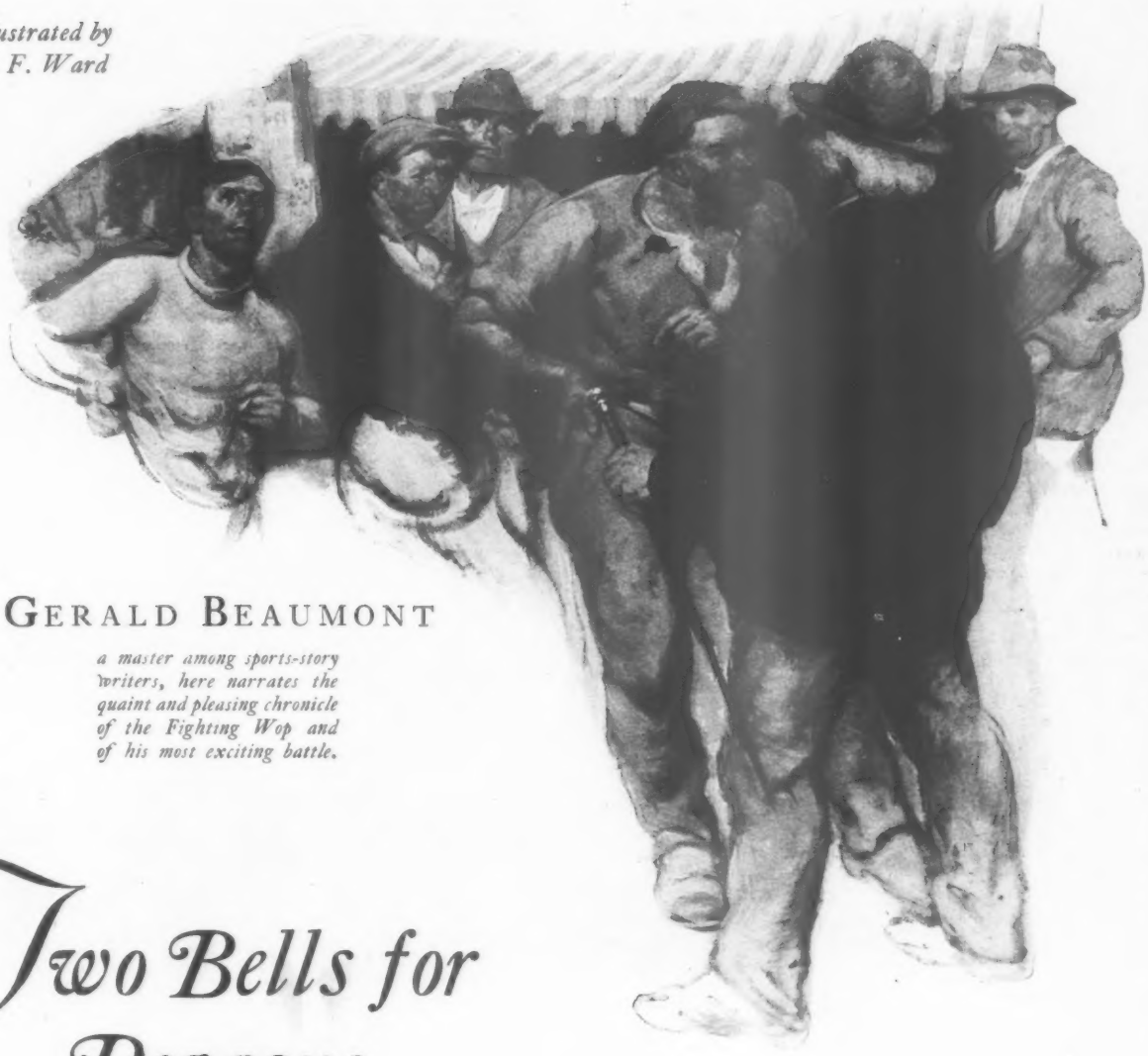
"Did you wake my maid?" she asked.

"No, miss. I saw you come out this way."

She took the envelope. The porter disappeared. And Yule moved slowly after him to the door and rested a hand on the knob.

"Please!" she breathed, and impulsively thrust the message toward him. "I can't open it!" *(Continued on page 116)*

Illustrated by E. F. Ward



GERALD BEAUMONT

a master among sports-story writers, here narrates the quaint and pleasing chronicle of the Fighting Wop and of his most exciting battle.

Two Bells for Pegasus

"Who gave you a license to referee here?" demanded Schaupp. "My brother licks this guy, or I lick him."

For he was a poet of punches
Pug laureate and biffer supreme;
His hook to the belt was an epic,
And his right to the jaw was a dream!
—*"Hearts and the Squared Circle."*

HE made his début in a pair of green trunks and a House of David hair-cut; and he told the announcer his name was Angelo Dionigi Micheletti. The shirt-sleeved herald got about one syllable, which is all that announcers ever get when they are dealing with preliminary boys.

"Of the St. Joseph Athletic Club," confided the youth in the green tights. "Angelo Dionigi Michel—"

Clutching an arm of the new performer, the master of ceremonies advanced to the ropes. He raised one hand in a vain appeal to the gallery for silence.

"Kid Mickey," he bawled, "de Fightin' Wop o' Nort' Beach!"

Alas for the rights of parentage and the still more sacred rites of the baptismal font—all swept aside in one instant by a red-haired youth with purple garters on his sleeves! Sacrilegiously shorn of his illustrious cognomen, the scion of the ancient Michelettis vanished, and it was Kid Mickey who advanced nervously at the tap of the bell.

Was not the loss of a kingdom traced to the missing nail in the shoe of a horse? Well, then, it was because of a piece of string that the son of Count Erberto Micheletti achieved fame that night, and all else followed. The string was around his waist, and it held in place the green trunks which had been borrowed, and were obviously too large. Scarcely had the last round started, when the string abandoned its appointed task, and Kid Mickey's gloves clutched at his middle. Promptly, Young Sharkey, the pride of Seventh Street, swung a right to the undefended jaw of his opponent. A volley of yells rose from Kid Mickey's corner.

"Hey, keep them gloves up! Where d'ya think y'are? Keep 'em up!"

The advice was wasted. Still with his gloves fumbling at the waist-line, the terrified novice bolted around the ring, striving to keep out of harm's way, and appealing vainly to the referee.

"Meester—one minute! Hey—Meester—"

But the club official was wearied with three rounds of fancy boxing, and disposed to have some fun. He declined to interfere. Young Sharkey trailed his man into a corner and went to work on the boy's head with both hands. Desperately the son of Count Micheletti sought in the name of modesty to weather the storm. He strove to keep the top of his scant costume against the middle rope, and to protect himself first with one hand, then the

other. But the handicap was too great, and the punishment beyond the limits.

Pop-eyed with concern, Jockey Williams shrieked from the victim's corner:

"Never mind your trunks, Wop—dis aint no grand opera! Step outa 'em, Kid! Thirty seconds to go! Come on, Nort' Beach—fight him! Ya-hoo! Atta boy—*go get him!*"

The final appeal of Jockey Williams was obliterated in a blast of yells. Five thousand men rose en masse to hail a lithe, dark-skinned Apollo, completely innocent of clothing, outraged beyond belief, and bent now upon wreaking the vengeance of the gods. Fifteen seconds before the gong, Young Sharkey, bleeding and bewildered, went down and out in the same corner with the deserted trunks; and—hailed by the whole pavilion—the Fighting Wop of North Beach was borne to his dressing-room by Jockey Williams and Jimmy the Fish, co-leaders of the "Forty Strong" gang.

That was the beginning. In good time there were other matches and more laurels, until the frail, soft-spoken Kid Mickey became the idol of the Friday-night four-rounders and the most distinguished citizen of North Beach. He rose to affluence, too, for Promoter Danny Nealon got the boy a job as a conductor on the municipal car-line at thirty-eight dollars a week, which, with the winner's end of hundred-dollar purses, made him eligible for an income tax.

It was all very surprising, for no one at first glance would have picked out this oval-faced youngster as a capable pugilist. By temperament and physiognomy he belonged either in the orchestra-pit or the choir-loft. But appearances are often deceptive. The history of the ring reveals many a champion with the look of an invalid and the kick of a mule in his right glove. Crouching down by the water-bucket, little Jockey Williams saw Kid Mickey bring home the bacon so many times with that right cross to the jaw, that the manager's war-cry became the slogan of the Forty Strong:

"When Mickey connects, boys—they go down!"

Gradually these things percolated beyond the realm of fistiana until they reached the ears of Count Erberto Micheletti, who lived alone in a rookery on Telegraph Hill, wore spotless linen, wrote poems and seldom had enough to eat.

There may have been room for argument concerning the merit of the Count's poetry, though it was published in *L'Italia* and other Italian periodicals, but he was most assuredly a gentleman, and would ever remain one. Even the sentimental little American woman who had married him had had to admit that much. She became his wife because one moon-caressed night he had hired all the organ-grinders in Naples to block the street outside her hotel, and play her favorite melody. He vowed the convention of organists would stay there and keep on playing until the stars fell or she said yes. But after they were married and had come to this country, the Countess Micheletti had shelved her husband in favor of some one with less gentility and more coin. Still later, she squeezed her soul from her body by means of corset-strings, leaving Angelo Dionigi to grow up and discover in his own way that his father was a nut.

Now, there is a vast gulf between Pegasus and an electric trolley, between an iambic tetrameter and a right hook to the chin, between the measureless star-topped Height of Parnassus and an eighteen-foot square of canvas, or even the rear platform of a municipal chariot. Across the chasm that split their world, father and son occasionally contemplated each other.

The elder Micheletti thought of his son in the livery of a public servant, collecting nickels and living the life of the two-bell brethren, and he shuddered. He saw his boy's portrait at the entrance to cigar-stores, read the label "Kid Mickey, the Fighting Wop of North Beach," and he wept.

"It is the judgment of Heaven, Cesare!" he deplored, making a confidant of old Cesare Botelli, to whose café he came every Saturday night. "Look you, a Micheletti that is called 'Keed Meek-ee' and who nothing does but fight and make a little bell go *'ding'* and then *'ding-ding!' Per Bacco!* Understand you, my good friend, there is the music, the arts, the law, even the medicine—but no! He must an impossible monkey on a car be, and all day long a string pull until even in my sleep do I hear that *'ding'* and then *'ding-ding.'* I should have in Naples stayed. Ah, Italia that once did the whole world rule!"

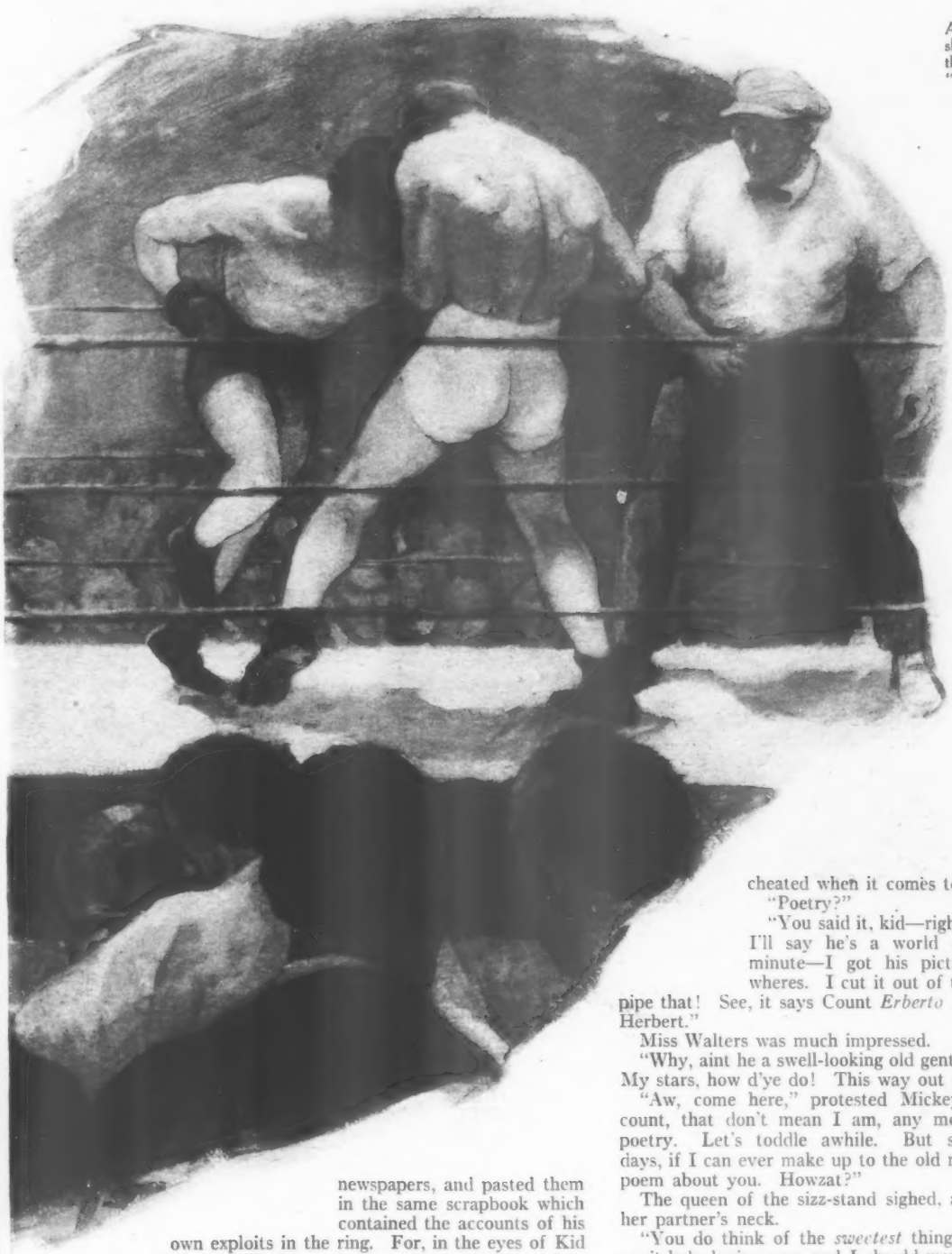
Old Cesare fumbled reflectively at the heavy gold chain that adorned his ample vest. He too was a poet, but of a more practical school. Cesare's seventy-five-cent dinners were the embodiment of culinary inspiration; they inflated the emotions without deflating the purse; hence he had not done badly in America.

"Italy—she's all right," proclaimed the proprietor. "I love her like she's my mother; but America—she's my wife, and I tella you, my friend, you bet you my damn head, I stick around. That boy he's sometime be rich."

Count Erberto Micheletti sighed.

"And I that had hoped to immortalize the heroes of our family, shall write nothing, alas, but *misereres!* Cesare, with your permission another helping of *maccheroni.*"

The younger Micheletti scissored his father's poems from the



An old man at the ringside shrieking the battle-cry of the red-shirted Garibaldians: "Avanti, Italiani—Avanti!"

newspapers, and pasted them in the same scrapbook which contained the accounts of his own exploits in the ring. For, in the eyes of Kid Mickey, Shakespeare was a busher compared to the distinguished scholar who lived on Telegraph Hill. Not in ten years had the boy visited his father, but there remained certain childhood impressions, nurtured since by imagination, and watered by the springs of natural affection, that now bloomed bravely in the breast of the Fighting Wop of North Beach. The ramshackle boarding-house atop the hill was a castle of mystery; the lonely figure with the gold-headed cane, glimpsed occasionally as the car sped out Columbus Avenue, was the phantom that clutched at Kid Mickey from the world of things that might have been. Sometimes he went out to Cesare Botelli's and got the restaurant man to show him the table where his father was wont to sit, and to relate anecdotes concerning him—narratives which Cesare embroidered in rose, because he was both a poet and a father of small children.

The idol of the Forty Strong gang sometimes spoke of these things to Miss Teddy Walters, whom he was in the habit of taking to the Saturday-night dance at the Bella Union. Teddy had small pink ears and was the soda-water queen in a Kearney Street drug-store.

"Wish you knew my old man," confided Mickey. "If I can ever get square with him, I'll give you a knock-down."

"Why, that's real nice of you," said Teddy. "Where does he work at?"

The Kid was shocked. "Why, what do you think my father is—a hay-baler? Don't you read none of the local papers? Aint you seen what comes out under his name? Well, say—you want to wake up, babe. I'll tell the world my old man's got 'em all cheated when it comes to poetry."

"Poetry?"

"You said it, kid—right out of the old dome, and I'll say he's a world champion. Here, wait a minute—I got his picture in my pocket somewheres. I cut it out of the paper. There you are; pipe that! See, it says Count *Erberto* Micheletti—that's wop for Herbert."

Miss Walters was much impressed.

"Why, aint he a swell-looking old gentleman! And a *count*, too! My stars, how d'ye do! This way out for little Teddy—"

"Aw, come here," protested Mickey. "Just because he's a count, that don't mean I am, any more than that I can write poetry. Let's toddle awhile. But say, listen: one of these days, if I can ever make up to the old man, I'll get him to write a poem about you. Howzat?"

The queen of the sizz-stand sighed, and placed an arm around her partner's neck.

"You do think of the *sweetest* things!" she breathed. "I just can't help loving you, and I should worry who knows it!"

The one-hundred-and-forty-five-pound demon of North Beach clinched gallantly, and they swung out on the floor while the saxophone moaned to the tune of "Susie, Swing Me to Sleep."

It was the gold-headed cane that complicated matters. This walking-stick was the last relic of Micheletti grandeur, the one treasure its owner had not sold nor pawned, the only remaining souvenir of his vanished authority. Usually it served him as a scepter in a world that was purely imaginative, and fulfilled its functions well; but here, one morning, he poked it into the realm of everyday life, and in consequence came to grief.

Where Genoa Avenue runs spearlike into the side of Umberto Street, and Bepo Vanucci keeps his goats alongside Perelli's butcher-shop, there is a vacant lot where for many years members of the Forty Strong have settled their differences with the citizenry of Columbus Heights.

Wandering a little far afield that morning, in search of a rebellious muse, Count Micheletti came upon little Jakey Schaupp striving desperately to defend himself from the attack of a boy years older. Around the pair of gladiators stood a grove of grinning men.

The poet of Telegraph Hill paused indignantly, and at that instant little Jakey, breaking away from a deluge of body blows, fled in the Count's direction, pursued by his opponent. Count Micheletti raised his gold-headed cane and swung it vigorously between pursuer and pursued.

"Shame!" he cried. "Ruffian, you shall the boy let alone! Begone with you! Begone!"

Alas for the vanished authority of the gold-headed cane! Up strolled Porky Schaupp, brother of little Jakey. Porky was the recognized middle-weight champion of the four-rounders, and the ruler of the Columbus Heights gang. He wrested the precious scepter from the hands of its owner and threw it under a passing car. Ebony dissolved in splinters.

"Who gave you a license to referee around here?" demanded the elder Schaupp. "My kid brother licks this guy or I lick him, see? Now beat it before I swing on you!"

"Villain!" shouted the elder Micheletti. "Cursed villain! Ah, *Dio*—my cane!"

He stumbled toward the car-tracks with arms outstretched, and from the rear Porky Schaupp aimed a blow from a large boot that sent Kid Mickey's father sprawling on the cobblestones. That kick completed the tragedy of the House of Micheletti. Shaken beyond belief, humiliated beyond endurance, the poet of Telegraph Hill arose with a useless knob of gold in one hand, and staggered down the street, babbling for the police.

What does a Dutch desk-sergeant understand about lese majesty or the inconceivable value of a walking-stick? Why should a kick more or less be regarded as just cause for turning out the riot-squad? The uniformed man behind the brass grilling registered Count Micheletti's complaint on a daily report-slip, and promised that when the patrolman called in, the matter would be investigated.

"You're lucky you didn't get knifed brother," said the apostle of the law. "Don't go interfering with those birds any more; let 'em alone!"

"You say to *me* to let the villains alone? *Me* who has been kicked and desecrated!" Count Micheletti stared at the handle of his beloved cane; his lips quivered. "It is the judgment of Heaven," he moaned; "I should have stayed in Naples. What a country is this! What a land of impossibilities!"

To Cesare Botelli on the following Saturday night the father of Kid Mickey confided his crowning humiliation. Cesare listened sympathetically.

"Dam-a da roughneck!" he ejaculated. "A thousan' times I tell you keep away from da hill, my friend. *Basta!* For you I speak to da police myself."

But Cesare did not invoke the aid of civic influence, after all; for the same night Kid Mickey showed up in search of news, and the fat proprietor repeated the story, with embellishments, to the Fighting Wop of North Beach.

KID MICKEY'S olive cheeks paled and then warmed under the rush of hot blood. His dark eyes turned the color of red gold.

"You don't say!" he muttered thickly. "You don't say! Broke the old man's cane, and kicked him in the pants? Wednesday morning, up by the hill lot, huh? Well, now, aint that nice? Much obliged, Cesare, old sport; I'll give you a ticket to the funeral."

"Hey, you Keed, you look out!" protested Cesare. "I no want you to pulla da shoot. If you killa da man, you go up!"

"Don't worry none about me going up; I don't have to use no gun. When I run this bird into his hole, I'll drag him up to the old man's house, and invite in all the neighbors. Believe me, he'll pay for that cane a thousand times over."

"Good," agreed Cesare. "But no pulla da shoot! You beat him up; I baila you out!"

"Well, go get your bank-roll, then," said the idol of North Beach. "You're going to need it quick!"

Up the hill to the butcher-shop of Tony Perelli went Mickey the Avenger, to demand of the proprietor certain facts.

"Was it an old guy with a cane?" questioned Tony. "Oh, sure, I seen him. What about it?"

"Nothing much," said Mickey, "—only he was my father, and he's a count, and the champion poet of the world. Who booted him?"

Tony Perelli whistled his consternation. "Your father, eh? Well, now if I'd 'a' known—"

"Never mind the bull. Who booted him?"

The man in the apron squirmed uneasily. "You leave it to me, Kid. I find out."

The fighting Wop of North Beach drew back his foot and poised within kicking distance of a glass show-case.

"Who did it?" he demanded. "I give you two seconds. Who—"

"Porky Schaupp!" yelled the proprietor. "Holy robe of St. Joseph, don't bust that case! Porky Schaupp done it. Get away from that case; I just paid fifty dollars for it."

"So it was Porky Schaupp, eh?" gritted Mickey.

Tony Perelli came from behind the counter, wiping his hands nervously on his apron.

"Don't say I told you," he pleaded; "and if you're going to bring your gang around tonight, tell me *now*, so's I can board up the windows."

"Tell you nothing," said Mickey. "If you ever lie to me again, I'll knock you into next week. Porky Schaupp, eh? Well, there's nothing like picking out a champion while you're about it. This is gonna be good."

FOUR blocks down the avenue, he turned to the left and made his way to the cigar-store conducted by his manager Jockey Williams. The former star of the pigskin saddle lent rapt attention while the situation was unfolded.

"Sweet patootie!" he murmured. "Looks like it's going to be a busy night. We aint licked that crowd since last summer, have we? I'll get busy on the phone right now!"

For a moment the shade of Mars appeared in the wings, cobblestone in one hand, brass knuckles in the other. If there is anything in mental telepathy, the Dutch sergeant at the North Beach station must have experienced right then an abdominal cramp. The policeman did not live who relished an assignment to Columbus Avenue when Jockey Williams and Jimmy the Fish led their cohorts into the domain of Porky Schaupp, for at the first appearance of the reserves, both sides always merged into an attack on the new enemy, and it was common gossip that somewhere in the district there was a basement that contained the uniforms of fifteen patrolmen.

But the telepathic storm-signal was hauled down, and the Dutch sergeant never knew how close he had been to losing his appointment with "the missus."

"Never mind the phone," said Mickey. "I'm only after one man, and I'm going to get him all by myself."

Jockey Williams snorted. "The only thing you'll get by yourself is a free ride in the morgue-wagon. That bird's a tough cooky; Jimmy and I will hop him with you."

The Fighting Wop of North Beach shook his head.

"You wont do nothing of the kind. All you'll do is go over to Danny Nealon and get me a match for next Friday night with Porky—winner take all. Then I'm going to get my old man to come down and see it."

Jockey Williams glared at his meal-ticket.

"What you been doing," he demanded, "—drinking wildcat milk, or taking a shot in the arm? Porky's a middle-weight, and a champion at that! You can't do better than forty-two—"

"Porky aint in good shape."

"Aw, slip that to the grass in Texas. Porky fights best when he's stewed, and you know it. He'd have to step on his own feet to lose."

"Well," concluded Mickey, "it's like this: either I go and bump that bird off with a gun and swing for it, or you make the match for next Friday night. Which'll it be?"

The manager pursed his lips and toyed with a handful of dice. He was mentally pondering over that ancient equation which begins, "When a good big man meets a good little man—" and proceeds to the logical conclusion. In the manager's mind, however, there rose the cryptic slogan:

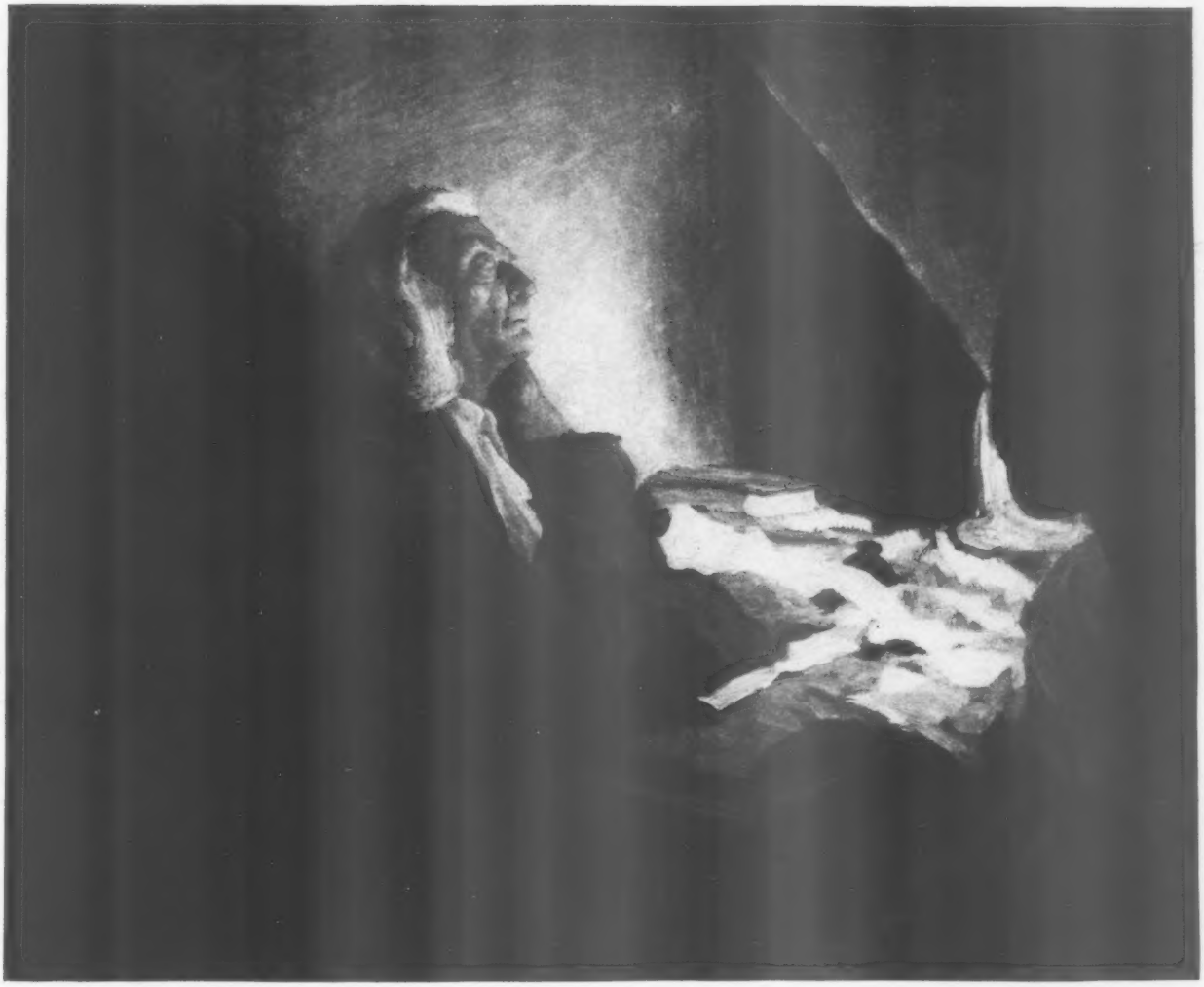
"When Mickey connects, boys—they go down!"

Jockey Williams hesitated.

"Of course when we give 'em twenty pounds, they haven't got anything to crow about if they win. We could make it on a percentage basis, and still get fat on the loser's end. The match will draw like a porous plaster—"

"Winner take all," insisted Mickey. "There aint going to be no loser's end. Porky will get just what's coming to him, and no more."

"What about me, Wop? What about my cut? Do I make the match, and train you, all for the privilege of carrying you home on my back?"



All that Count Micheletti had written was a single sentence: "When Mickey connects, boys—they go down!"

"Same cut as usual, if we win or draw," said Mickey; "and I'll pay you fifty bucks if I lose."

A glint of admiration showed in the blue eyes of little Jockey Williams. He came as near to loving the Fighting Wop of North Beach as though the boy had been his brother.

"Pound me pink if you aint a sport, Wop. I don't want your dough. Come on up to the gym' this afternoon, and I'll have Spider Duffy up there. He's fought Porky lots of times, and knows his style. I'd give the store to see you knock that big bum for a row of tombstones!"

But there were obstacles to the match. Promoter Danny Nealon reasoned that Kid Mickey and Porky Schaupp were the two best drawing-cards in the realm of the four-rounders. To bring them together was to kill off one, and headliners were scarce. Then, Captain O'Brien of the Central Station, by whose majestic sufferance bouts were held, shook his head gravely when the promoter consulted him.

"I don't like the looks of it, Dan, though glory be, 'twould draw half the city! Must be twenty pounds between the lads, and 'tis too much in these days, though I mind the time when little Joe Walcott stopped Australian Jimmy Ryan. What a night!"

"Ay," said Nealon. "And do you recall that Young Griffo, a featherweight, outboxed Creedon, who scaled one hundred fifty-eight? There was a boy for you!"

"True enough. Them were the days, Dan. Did I tell you that I was in the corner of the Nonpareil when he knocked out Fogarty in the twenty-seventh?"

"You haven't told me since I saw you last," said Nealon. "This boy Kid Mickey walks into his man just like old Jack—"

"Does he, now?"

"He does; and when he connects, they go down! You know, Cap'—the old left shift, and the right cross. Sets himself pretty, he does."

"Twenty pounds," mused Captain O'Brien. "'Tis not so very much when you come to think of it. He fights like the Nonpareil, you say?"

"For all the world," said Dan. "You'd think it was Jack himself, come to life again. Same crouch, same footwork, same speed. If it was anybody but Porky Schaupp, I'd be for taking a chance."

Captain O'Brien played with a pink blotter, and allowed his memory to hearken back a quarter of a century. Behind his ears, a pink flush crept into the white hair. His nostrils expanded.

"'The bigger they are, the harder they fall,'" he quoted. "Who did this fellow Schaupp ever lick? Don't tell me he could stand up against the Nonpareil. Make the match, Dan; make it, or I'll be after closing you up!"

"But what about the two gangs?" protested the promoter. "They'll be there with all their relatives. Who's going to guarantee me protection?"

"Whist!" chuckled Captain O'Brien. "I'll be at the ringside myself, Dan. Split the reserved-seat sections in two and sell all the left of the house south of Market, and the other half to North Beach. I'll put my best men in the aisles. Tell this Mickey lad to keep away from Porky in the first three rounds. Then let him walk in with both hands, and we'll see if the champion can take 'em. Mind you, Dan, I'm betting your Eyetalian can't hit like the Nonpareil; never a laddy-buck have I seen that could do that, Dan."

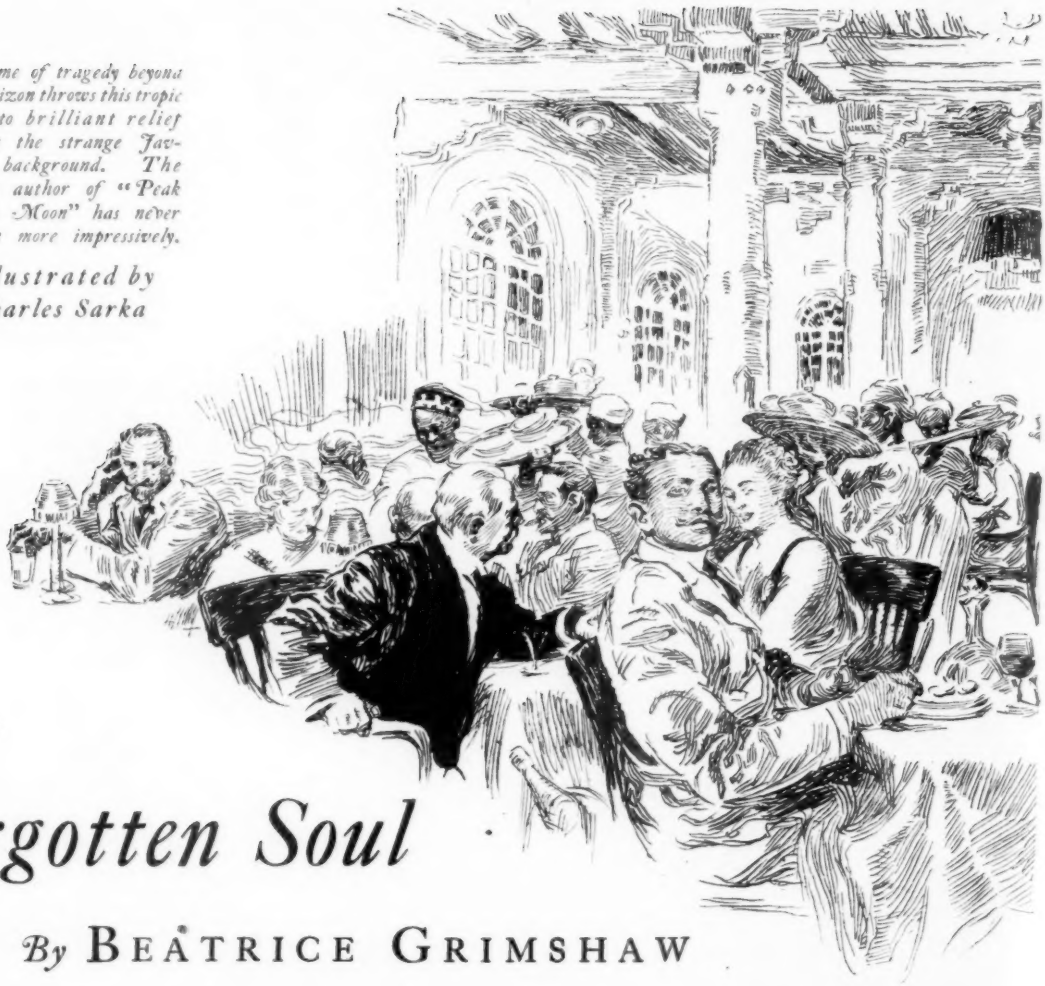
Nealon picked up his hat and moved toward the door.

"Maybe he can't, Cap'," he said sententiously, "maybe he can't; but there's one thing certain: when Mickey connects, they go down!"

(Continued on page 152)

A flame of tragedy beyond the horizon throws this tropic tale into brilliant relief against the strange Javanese background. The famous author of "Peak of the Moon" has never written more impressively.

Illustrated by Charles Sarka



Forgotten Soul

By BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

THE sea is almost always silver in those parts—silver, with blue iris shadows, and thumbs and horns of islands, blue, blue-green, blue-purple, pricking up on the edges of the world. The liners go over the silver like sledges gliding on snow; you do not know, or think, how hull meets water. You are aware of decks pale, shaded from the sun; of winds that run blood-warm from the proud bow; of a life eventless, dreamy, slipping by with scarce more ripple than the ship leaves on the waveless plain of these far Malayan seas.

Yet the ships make history, tragedy; build empires, tear them down. And the ship-life molds lives.

Bell—Frank Austin Bell; you remember him, perhaps? A youngish fellow with gingerish hair and a good figure; good face, too; hard face, man's face; brown eyes with some voltage to the back of them; mouth that shut the right way—the Bell (there are so many Bells) who knew all about tin, and went out to the Straits Settlements for a company; *that* Bell—remember now? Bell, then, was on board a Dutch-Indian liner, not so many years ago, going to Australia. He had done with the tin that wasn't in the Straits Settlements, and his company was sending him to Darwin. I cannot tell you why.

It was at Singapore that the girl got on. I find it hard to tell about her, because, frankly, I hate her, partly because of what she is herself, partly on account of what she did. But I recognize that you, and a great many others, would not agree with me. Bell did not—worse luck!

I was on the boat that trip. This story is not about me, but I have to bring myself in. I ought not be in any story; I am one of the men (there are many) who remain deliberately and joyfully unmarried, with no "history" at the back of it. You women will never understand.....

I saw her before we were clear of the islands. She was on the promenade-deck, sitting in a cheap canvas chair. Her sister was with her, in a cane chair of the most expensive kind. The sister was married to a wealthy Batavia merchant with a touch of the tar-brush, Javanese variety. Women will do these things—nice women, too. The girl Avice—affected name, rather—had been staying with another married sister in Singapore. I judged that she meant to spend her time between Singapore and Batavia until something—or some one—turned up. Now, understand that I do not blame her, or any number of Avices. They follow their natural, and on the whole, not blamable instincts, just as your cat does when she watches at mouse-holes for mice, and tries to look as if she weren't doing anything of the kind. Cats, and women, must live.....

But Bell—my Bell, your Bell, our Frank Austin Bell—ought not to have been her meat. Weren't there army men, and civilians, and planters—Lord, weren't there bagmen, anything, anybody, rather than Bell?

It began after dinner the first night, when she had that difficulty with the hind legs of her chair that every self-respecting young woman has when a mouse—I mean a marriageable man—peeps out of its—I mean, comes along the deck. Bell, of course, stopped and said "Allow me," and she was surprised.

She had her English complexion still; she'd the prettiest little slip of a figure; her hair—beautiful browny-brown, and very thick—was drawn down in those curtains that girls affect. It made her face look smaller, and her eyes bigger. They were blue; I suppose they are still. She wore a plain black evening frock, rather high cut; there was a conventual air about her. Avice, one understands, had been very well brought up. I believe the girl—in those days—had a sort of soul about her.

Before we had sighted Sumatra, Bell was destroying my afternoon's sleep with information, many times repeated, to the effect that Avice Ferrers was an angel, a white rose, a dove, and several other things one thinks one has heard of before in a similar connection. The odd thing about it was that Avice really did

I saw them walking to their rooms, flushed with drink. Avice walked as a native woman walks; she undulated.

suggest doves and roses and angels, without prejudice to the streak of cat which seemed, somehow, to run alongside. I have sometimes wondered—of a night when the bow stands black among the stars, and the sea is making that double heartbeat against the ship's unseen sides that one only hears in very quiet weather—I have wondered, alone on deck when the lights had been put out, and the last flirtation dissolved into its constituent parts, whether Avice, given other circumstances, might not have been a very different woman.

But that sort of speculation is of all things on earth, or sea, the most foolish and most fruitless.

They were engaged before Batavia. I do not think the married sister took it very kindly; she had a fine flair for the going-to-be-successful man; but for his opposite! Still, she made no open trouble. And she took Avice away. And the boat went on.

Bell, I have always said, ought to have been a poet rather than a mining engineer. He used to say there was poetry in his work—which proves my contention. A man who can see poetry in mining oughtn't to have anything to do with it—mining, I mean.

And people like you and myself know, without arguing, that such views are a prophecy of ill-success. They are idealist. Who, at the word *idealist*, does not see cracked, ill-blackened boots, cuffs trimmed with scissors, the wrinkled smile of the man who sits on the edge of chairs and talks too earnestly to bankers?

Yet, you remember, all of us liked Bell, and expected him to succeed, though we knew he wouldn't. When he disappeared, I, for one, spent more time and money than I shall ever pick up again, making inquiries of Dutch and native officials, hunting the jungles, scouring native towns, Chinese quarters. But I did not find him. I did not find a trace of him. He had returned from Australia; I ran across him, I remember, in the Javanese port of Sourabaya, and we had a few weeks together. After that I left, but when I heard of his disappearance, I came back. Nothing was any good. From the day he disappeared,—and that was about a year after his affair with Miss Ferrers,—to the present year, no one in Java, in Dutch or English Malaya, in England, or any place between, heard anything of Bell.

I did not give the matter up. Bell was my friend. It became impossible, for various reasons, to go on with the useless search; but I kept my ears open, and eyes at work, while traveling about.

There was a night in the Java Sea—a thundery, black-purple night, with sword-play of lightning off away on the rim of nowhere—when I was sitting, for coolness, close to the smoke-room door. A fellow was next to me whom I knew—no matter how—to be a Secret Service man. Some of you know him too. He is like a bit of the eighteenth century; I wont say more.

Well, this French-Revolution, *Sidney Carton* chap, when he had done with the cigar he was smoking leaned forward across me to reach an ash-tray. And he saw the lightning busy at its tierce and quartre, lunging, parrying something. It was amazingly bright and wicked that night. Sidney Carton—to give him a name that was not his—leaned out into the doorway, and said half to himself:

"I never saw it like that since the night I was at Forgotten Soul."

That was a name to fling at you, was it not, in the Java Sea,

with thunder creeping up, and a man's mind tingling pins and needles, with the things he wanted to forget? I did not know where or what Forgotten Soul might be; but the sound of it did not suit me. I said nothing at all; I may have looked unpleasant. You never know how much Carton sees, how much he knows, or guesses. To this day, I am not sure whether his next words were accidental or not.

"You're getting off at Sourabaya? Yes? That's where it is, in the suburbs."

"What is it?" I asked him.

Carton (to call him by the name that is not at all like his) chose another cigar out of his case, and cut the end, while he answered. He did not look at me—you have to look at a cigar, when you are nipping the end off.

"It's a bungalow," he said. "Deserted."

"Deserted? Why?"

"I don't know. Are you going to have a game of bridge?"

"God forbid."

"Oh, yes—you don't play."

"Neither do you—having no vacancies to fill up."

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean," he laughed.

Carton never lays claim to intelligence. He got up by and by, and strolled away, and I, getting my things together to land at Sourabaya, decided—I did not know why—that I'd like to know something more about the place with the curious name. I did not fancy it, but it drew me.

When I had landed, sent my things up by carrier, and taken a motor for myself; when, behind a mad Malay chauffeur I was being made to run amuck through the clotted traffic of that red-hot port; when I saw the endless, black, burning road lying out ahead of me, with the telegraph-posts and lines dwindling to a fine point far away; when I saw all the life of Java, clad in coal-lumpers' rags, in silk sarongs of cerise and buttercup, in jade-green coats and turbans of returned Mecca pilgrims, in spangled Indian *saris*, boiling past me—when I saw all this again, as I had seen it in the years passed by, I could think of nothing but my lost mate Bell.

Last time I had gone ashore in the seven-times-hateful port of Sourabaya, Bell had been with me. We had been younger then—not many years, but it tells. We had laughed and ragged one another about this and that; we had thought the heat great fun—why, a man could have fried an egg by breaking it on the Sourabaya roadway, black and hot as the top of a stove! We made a joke of that. Bell said we'd get off and try. The road was lined for a mile, at the least, with stalls and markets and bazaars of food. On one side were covered booths with superior stuff, aniline-colored cakes and sweets kept fresh in jars, tinned foods from Holland, sweet drinks served on trays; on the other, open stalls were loaded with washbasins of curry mixture and of rice, piles of fritters, bundles of vegetables curiously colored, leaves full of spicy relishes, pink drinks that must have been mostly essence of cholera, cakes that suggested rats and plague. Bell and I hunted for eggs, but we didn't get any.

I remember that he bought some of the plague-and-cholera food, despite my remonstrances, and ate it on the spot. "It's quite good," he said, "—better than the greasy truck in the hotel. They know a thing or two."

"You'll be dead, kicking, by tomorrow night," I told him. And he said he wouldn't!

Trifles, rubbish! But it came back to me,—how clearly! —that afternoon, years later, when I and the Malay ran amuck, in defiance of Javanese police, along the burning Sourabaya road.

Everything ends, even roads that seem to have no ending. It is not really many miles from the port to the town. I found my hotel by and by, and settled into it. I had archeological studies to make before long, and no one to hinder me in making them. If I had married you, dear lady who reads this, you would have seen to it that I did something better with my money and my time!

The hotel is like most Javanese hotels, a paradise for the human body, a poison-gas for the mind. You cannot work in a Javanese hotel. You cannot study. If you can think, it is not for long. These enchanted marble palaces, shadowed, deep-arcaded, set in the midst of palms that never stir a sleepy finger against the sun-bleached sky, filled with quiet and with the sound of dropping waters, are places for the sensuous life alone. You awake in the dawn, to eat strange,

Before he had time to close the opening, I was in behind him. The man gave a

great cry, dropped his poor bundle of food and stood staring, hands stretched out.

luscious fruits cooled on ice; you bathe in marble tanks, are served with endless variety of rich, spiced foods, in dining-halls like churches, by barefoot servants dressed in ghostly white. You sleep, the whole long afternoon, behind closed blinds, on your enormous bed. At dusk you eat, drink,—something fierce and drugging,—bathe, dress, go forth to drive. You return to drink more meady, treacherous Holland drinks, and eat and eat yet again, native bands playing music that intoxicates as much as do the drinks, and Javanese girls, fair though dark, with roses and white jasmine in their hair, looking softly at you from the star-sparkled arches of the terrace.

No, you need not talk scandal about me. I am good, hard Scots, and I do not waste valuable money on that which profits not. You do not find me in Dutch-Indian hotels, beyond the day or two necessary for engaging servants, making out routes and putting up my traveling kit.

But there are others.

I have seen the men, out from home—at first slim, springy, energetic, clear of eye—sink, in a year or two, down to the level of a mere fatted beast. I have seen women—

That brings me to it; I had near forgotten.

It was growing toward dusk, and Sourabaya was awaking. Down the main street of the town, with its strange mixture of old, pillared, tiled Dutch houses, and new glittering shops, came the nightly flood of splendid motorcars, filled with wax-faced Chinese merchants and diamonded Chinese wives, with Javanese chiefs and princesses, with Dutch officials, huge, gross, pink, and their fat, gorgeous womenkind. It was half-dusk; a greenish light, melting into bands of orange, filled the sky. Against the almond-white of towering trade-palaces you could see the thin, tired palms beginning to shake their leaves. There was no breeze to speak of; but the palms, and the people, made the most of it.

I was not in a motor; I was walking. People have said—apropos of a lot of very ordinary happenings in my life—that I am a brave man. I believe it, when I think of walking in Sourabaya at the hour of the evening drive. Few white, or half-white human beings ever set boot or shoe to ground in this, the laziest, proudest city under the Line. I walked; I am primarily an archeologist, but also in some degree, a student of ethnology, and you cannot study shapes of heads and facial angles from a flying Rolls-Royce.

A motorcar, a huge, splendid one, slipping by as swiftly as a gannet goes to the deep, went past me at a corner. It nearly ran me down; I sprang aside, under an electric-light standard, and saw, as the car spun round and disappeared —Avice.

I do not know how I recognized her with such certainty, unless my recent studies helped me out. I had been teaching myself to look for the essential, the unchanging, in human faces, and to neglect mere accretions of time and circumstance. I saw, in the woman who lolled back on the brocaded cushions of that car—the squat woman shaped like two balloons, lobster-eyed with sensuous, satisfied greed—in her I saw Avice, who had been, some short years before, the dove, the rose, the angel of Frank Bell.

The woman's mind was dead—if she had ever had one, and if her delicate nymph-body had not lied, as Bell maintained furiously it did not, and as I held fast that it did. She was handsome, in spite of fat; she called to you. She knew it. She garnered up, gloatingly, even the stray look that I gave her as the car went round the corner. I could see her garnering such looks, living on them; using them as bait and line by which to draw her prey to her. Did she, when the line was reeled in, pull her fish to the bank and land it, or did she reel out and let it go again? I did not know or care. It matters very little, when a woman's soul has died, what becomes of the rest of her. But I thought her husband—yes, she owned one, a little dry old fellow, hunched into his coat—had the beaten look about him that one knows.

They went by; and the world and the flesh and the devil, but most of all the flesh, went by too, in an endless stream of cars, for hours longer. But I went back to the hotel, and all the way, thoughts were beating about in my brain like birds in a cave, unable to find light. I let them alone. They find the light for themselves, if you leave them.

I reached the hotel; and there, seated on the great marble veranda where the white electrics *(Continued on page 142)*

The distinguished author of "Mamselle Chérie" is at his best in this fascinating story of a beautiful girl's battle for success and of her curious adventures in varying strata of society.

Fires of Ambition

Written and Illustrated by

GEORGE GIBBS

The Story So Far:

MARY RYAN had come to America as a child in the steerage, and she had grown up in a poverty-stricken household; but she had a bountiful dower of beauty and of intelligence, and she was determined to win better—far better—things for herself. Somehow she managed a course in business college; and this enabled her to obtain a position as stenographer with the Hygrade Company, dealers in women's dresses.

Mary prospered with the Hygrade; she took advantage of the employees' discount to buy one of their dresses; and when the president Mr. Wittmaier and the head salesman Al Crawley saw how well she wore it, a chance for quicker achievement—at greater peril—was offered her. She was asked to help Crawley sell the Hygrade dresses by wearing them while accompanying him to certain exclusive shops that had hitherto declined to carry the Hygrade "line." She consented—and succeeded, remarkably. Both Lucille Dunois and "Madame Denise" (who was in reality a man named Alan Wetherby) agreed to put a dress in stock; and Mary Ryan's value to the Hygrade Company was now unquestioned.

Al Crawley asked Mary to dine with him in celebration. She thought of Joe Bass, whom she had known a long time and liked well, who was saving from the meager profits of a news-stand to put himself through law-school—and who was to have called for her at the Hygrade's closing time. Joe would have to wait and to forgive her. This was important to her future.

She dined with Crawley—her first visit to a fashionable restaurant. Afterward he took her to other novel experiences— a theater and a cabaret, at which he drank too much.

"You little devil! I'm crazy about you," he said suddenly as they halted at the steps of her boarding-house.

Before she knew it, he had her in his arms. His lips just brushed her cheek when she wrenched away from him, her free hand striking.

"Let me be, you fool," she gasped furiously, "or I'll hate you!"

He straightened, fingering his jaw, and was silent while Mary unlocked the door with a latchkey.

"Mary—" he muttered.

"Good night, Mr. Crawley." The door was shut in his face.

When Mary had crept up to her small room, she had long sleepless hours to think it all over. Had she made an enemy of Crawley instead of a useful acquaintance? *(The story continues in detail:)*

SHE had learned something—a profound distaste for diamond stick-pins. But she said nothing to Joe Bass, who might have made himself unpleasant. And as Mr. Crawley went out of town the next morning, she did not see him until a week later, when he came into the office and begged her pardon. Of course she forgave him; but when Mr. Wittmaier suggested trying to sell to other specialty shops in near-by cities, she demurred, telling him quite frankly what had happened. She was a little disappointed in his laughter. The affair, it seemed, was not nearly so serious from his point of view as she had imagined. "Al told me about things," he said. "You mustn't mind Al. It's just his way. He likes the girls—always did, even before he was married."

He missed Mary's gasp.

"And you slapped his face for him?" he went on. "Ha-ha! Couldn't get anywhere with *you*, could he?"

"I'm sorry I went out with him," she said tensely.

"But think what you did together! Denise and Lucille Dunois!"

"That's all very well, Mr. Wittmaier," she said. "I took my own chances; but you'll have to excuse me from modeling any more for Mr. Crawley."

He only laughed again.

"A pretty girl like you's got to expect that sort of thing. You needn't worry about Al. He'll come around—"

"But I don't want him to come around," she insisted.

"There, there!" he went on soothingly. "Now, don't be cross. You mustn't be at outs with Al. We all got to work together. You want to make yourself valuable to the Company, don't you? You got a way of wearing clothes that might mean a lot of money to us. I been thinking you can do a lot with our out-of-town customers when they come to New York. We might arrange a small commission for you on a bill of goods—"

"I don't understand," said Mary quietly.

"Well, the way you helped Al shows you got the face and figure to show our line to advantage. Maybe you were right about your modeling. I can't let you go from my office. I need you here to

"Isn't it adorable, Reggie?" said Mrs. Despard earnestly. "Prettiest thing I ever saw in my life," Cheever replied, his gaze on Mary's face. "Such color! Such hair!"

keep me straight. But in your spare time—slack afternoons and an occasional evening—"

"What exactly do you mean?" demanded Mary.

"Modeling in the exhibition-room, meeting some of the trade and making yourself pleasant generally. Some of them are ladies, but there are gentlemen too, very nice gentlemen who don't know just what they want and have to be shown. Our young ladies here do what they can to make our visitors feel at home in New York when they're on their buying trips."

The mask was off. Mr. Wittmaier still wore his fatherly manner, but it was somehow engulfed in the larger issues of expediency. Business came first with him—first, last and all the time.

She turned to her desk and took up a sheet of carbon paper.

"I've always been in the habit of choosing my friends for myself, Mr. Wittmaier," she said coolly.

He frowned over his glasses at her.

"Now, don't you be uppish, my dear," he said. "I wouldn't suggest it if you hadn't convinced me you knew how to look out for yourself. I been good to you. Just as kind as if I was your papa, haven't I? I ask it as a favor. You know me. No nonsense about me—all business. We get along all right. I wouldn't ask you if it wasn't important. And you'll be satisfied— I'll make it all right with you."

"Who is it that you want me to meet?" she asked more calmly.

"I want you to go out with Mr. Louis Rose when he asks you. He saw you yesterday. He wants to meet you. He's a very nice man from Detroit, Michigan—very quiet, married, with a large family. Old enough to be your father—"

"Then why should he want to go out with me?" she blurted out.

"Oh, just as a companion to pass the evening. Can't you sympathize with a man far from his wife and family, alone in a room in a big hotel in New York, especially if he is sociable? We got to get him in a good humor, prevent him from going with a girl from some other house, keep him from getting his goods somewhere else. Put him—er—under obligations, you might say—to the Hygrade—"

"Obligations which *I* provide!"

"Just the pleasure of your company, my dear. It makes these old fellows feel young again to go out with young girls—flatters their vanity to walk in a restaurant or a theater and have people turn around and stare." He patted her shoulder in his ponderous way. "Say you will, my dear. I will take it as a personal favor to me—a personal favor. Maybe some day after a while you'll want a raise in salary again. You'll go, yes?"

He stood off with arms akimbo, inspecting her, still smiling. He seemed very determined.

She smiled a little. Business first! And she had thought him so fatherly! Already she had an intuition that as far as her own career was concerned, the Hygrade Garment Company had little further value.

And yet there could be no danger in taking dinner or supper

with this respectable family man from Detroit. The prospect did not daunt her. He might be even less unpleasant than Mr. Al Crawley had been. But something within her revolted at the prospect, and she resented the assurance of her employer in asking this favor. He held her too cheap. She had already lost something in self-esteem. She was not ready yet to capitalize her looks in such paltry ventures. And yet were not these ventures useful in overcoming her pitiful ignorance in the ways of the world? She slipped a sheet into the typewriter and clicked it into position with a matter-of-fact air.

"Very well, Mr. Wittmaier. I'll think about it."

Her reply seemed to satisfy him, for after a moment he went out of the office.

A FEW days or so later Mary Ryan left her desk at noon, went out and walked rapidly northward along the Avenue, hurrying, her face slightly flushed with exercise, into the door of "Madame Denise." In the outer store were several women shoppers, but in reply to her question one of the saleswomen informed her that Mr. Wetherby was in his private office at the rear of the rose-and-old-ivory exhibition-room.

He was busy at some private correspondence, but at the sound of her timid knock he turned, removing his eyeglasses.

"Who—"

"It's Miss Ryan, sir. I thought I'd call; you know you asked me to But if you're busy—"

"Ah—the oak-leaf girl. No. Come in, Miss Ryan," he said in his languid voice. "I am very glad to see you."

"You said you might give me a chance—"

"Ah, yes, so I did. You have some very remarkable qualities of face and figure." He indicated the French armchair near by. "Wont you sit down?" he asked, watching her calmly.

"You know," she went on, "I have thought a number of times of making this visit, but you see, I am very busy all day except at the noon hour, and often I don't get out even then. But I've been wondering whether you really meant what you said about there being a chance of my being useful here."

"Possibly," purred Mr. Wetherby, "if you had come a little sooner. But of course this is our dull season. In the fall, for instance—"

"Oh, I'm so sorry," she said. "I'm afraid I couldn't wait that long. I've got to find something to do at once."

"That's too bad. But you did not give the impression of being a professional model. You have done some other kind of work?"

"Yes. I'm secretary to Mr. Wittmaier, the president of the Hygrade; but things have happened which make it difficult for me there—"

"Ah! I wondered if you weren't just a little out of your element *en cette galère*," he murmured with his slow smile. "Some one has been—er—unpleasant to you?"

She glanced at him quickly. "How could you guess that?"

He smiled. "I have not been in New York for thirty years without learning something about the business with which you are associated."

She laughed nervously.

His look inquired, and so she went on:

"I was engaged as secretary and stenographer. I made good. But that wasn't enough. Now I'm expected to 'entertain' out-of-town customers."

He nodded.

"I am aware of that custom among certain business houses."

It had not been her intention to tell him the reasons for her dissatisfaction, but there was interest and sympathy in his manner of listening and she went on, gaining confidence from his mild gray eye and gentle tones.

"I wanted to help the business if I could," she went on. "I tried to be loyal to Mr. Wittmaier, but my self-respect was worth more to me than the Hygrade Garment Company. A man named Rose, a family man from Detroit, old enough to know better—he was a fool. I ran away from him in the crowd, and he was too old to catch me. The next day he bought a bill of goods from a rival concern. Mr. Wittmaier was angry. I told him that he asked too much of his stenographers— and here I am. I don't know why I should come running to you, Mr. Wetherby, but you seemed so kind—"

He smiled in an abstracted way.

"I don't think you belong with the Hygrade Company, Miss Ryan," he said.

"I don't know just where I do belong," she replied dubiously.

He rubbed his bald head reflectively. "A face like yours is always a dangerous asset, my child."

"But I can't help my face. Now, can I? I wanted to make good in business. That was my first job. I've worked hard, nights, to learn business efficiency. I think I've got a talent for business. But I'm not going to cheapen myself again."

"You're a good stenographer? Do you know anything of bookkeeping?"

"Of course. Oh, Mr. Wetherby, if you could only let me have a trial. I'm getting thirty dollars a week, but I'd come to you for a while for just enough to live on."

He smiled at her enthusiasm and rose, pulling at his mustache and slowly pacing the floor. "I wonder!" he muttered. "You know, the technique of my business is tricky. Selling gowns is all a matter of psychology."

"I could learn—I can learn anything."

"Wont you stand up, Miss Ryan, please?"

He paused before her, his gaze passing over the lines of her slim figure. And yet, though Mary Ryan had learned a distrust of older men as well as young, she had no feeling of disquietude; Alan Wetherby's gaze of appraisal was that of the artist. It was almost impersonal. He passed her and pushed back a sliding door in a panel at one side.

"These are the new models for the fall—my own. No one has seen them." He glanced at her again, fingering the robes with delicate fingers, and then took one out. It was a ball-dress of sea blue, shot through with a sheen like that on a peacock's breast.

"Your coloring, with this scheme of blue—I want to see it."

He led the way to the door of a dressing-room and called a girl to help her into it. It was quite low in the neck and back, and Mary had a feeling of nakedness which sent a warm flush to her very brows. She had never been conscious of having so little on. But she knew that such frocks were worn at dinners and dances, and that gave her the courage to emerge, coloring prettily. She didn't miss the note of pleasure in Alan Wetherby's voice.

"Ah, I thought so! It's the iridescence of the hair which pulls the thing together. You are rather gorgeous, my dear. Fine texture of skin, good shoulders, well articulated. Look at yourself."

He indicated a full-length mirror, switched on a light—and she gazed rather startled at her own loveliness.

"Oh," she gasped. "Oh, Mr. Wetherby!"

She had never known that the skin of her shouders had such a milky whiteness, that her cheeks could have so much color, or that her dark eyes could be so bright.

"I can't believe it. It's like a dream."

"Walk," said Wetherby.

She obeyed.

"Thanks!" he said as she returned to him. "I'm glad you haven't adopted the Broadway strut. Where did you learn to wear clothes?"

His question took her off her guard.

"Sure, I—I've been wearing 'em since I was a bit of a girl."

He laughed. "But never so few, I'll warrant." He turned to the girl who had helped her. "That will do," he said.

Mary paused before the mirror for one last look, and was on her way to the dressing-room when the velvet curtains to the outer shop were opened and a girl appeared.

"Mrs. Despard, Mr. Wetherby. She wants to see you, about the white silk."

"Oh!" He hesitated. "Tell her I'll see her at once." He paused with a glance at Mary, changing his mind. "No, Miss Barnes. Tell her to come back. I'll see her here. Wait a moment, if you please, Miss Ryan. I would like Mrs. Despard to see you."

THE model hesitated, then turned back into the room. A feminine voice was heard outside, and then Mrs. Despard entered. She was very pretty, a brunette, exquisitely dressed in expensive morning simplicity of embroidered linen. Behind her stood a man in blue flannels and yellow gloves, carrying a hat and a cane. In her brief glance Mary saw that he was scarcely more than thirty, good-looking in a heavy sort of way, and that his glance had found her at the moment that the curtains had parted. An involuntary motion of the hands toward her shoulders, and then another generous flow of warm color to her cheeks.

Mrs. Despard's quick look took in the situation.

"Oh, how lovely!" she said. "You don't mind Mr. Cheever coming? Mr. Reginald Cheever, Mr. Wetherby."

"How do you do, Mr. Cheever? Not at all. I thought you might care to see this frock, Mrs. Despard. The first of my new models—the very first."

" I like to look at you as I look at these pictures. I'm just that sort of a maniac—no other. You don't object?"

Mrs. Despard took a pace forward. "It's *too* adorable," she gasped. "One of my colors, too. Isn't it lovely, Reggie?"

"Ripping," said Reggie.

Mary turned in sudden terror.

"Where?" she gasped. "Oh, Mr. Wetherby!"

The outburst of laughter disturbed her the more, and her confusion grew as she realized the meaning of the word.

"A creation," Wetherby went on, "my own. I searched all summer for that piece of material. There can be nothing like it."

"I must have it, Mr. Wetherby," said Mrs. Despard earnestly. "Isn't it adorable, Reggie? You like it, don't you?"

Mr. Reginald Cheever replied with his gaze still on Mary Ryan's face.

"Adorable!" he said with an abstracted air. "Prettiest thing I ever saw in my life. Such color! Such hair! I hope you don't mind, Miss—Miss—"

Wetherby smiled, and introduced the model, while Mrs. Despard whispered reprovingly.

Mary in some embarrassment turned to Wetherby.

"Is that all, Mr. Wetherby?" she asked with dignity.

"Yes, thanks. That's all."

Mary went into the dressing-room. She knew afterward that Mrs. Despard had bought the frock and that the price had been six hundred dollars. Mary stared. It was difficult to believe that people had so much money to spend for so little. But Alan Wetherby only smiled.

"Your visit here today was fortunate, Miss Ryan. Mrs. Despard is very wealthy. She can never endure seeing anyone better gowned than she is. But she will not look as well in that frock as you did."

"You're very kind," she made answer. And then, "Don't you think that I could be useful to you here, Mr. Wetherby?" she appealed.

He sat at his desk, fumbling for a moment among his papers.

"I think you might, Miss Ryan. You seem to be unspoiled. Perhaps you realize now that I am very particular. The whole business of 'Madame Denise' is built around the principles of originality and exclusiveness. It is the intimate, personal touch which has given this house its reputation for elegance. That's why I have no exhibition stage or extra lighting. That's why I abhor the idea of promiscuous models smirking and strutting about the place. The idea is—er—unpleasant."

"I hoped," ventured Mary, "that I might be useful to you in other ways—correspondence, bookkeeping, stenography, typewriting—"

"Perhaps. We shall see. I would like to give you more than thirty dollars a week, but I am making a venture. I'll be frank enough to say that it is less than I am giving my other girls. But

of course, if you prove your usefulness when the season opens, I might do better."

"Oh, thanks, Mr. Wetherby," she said. "I'll try very hard."

"When can you come?"

"Next Monday."

"Very good." He rose and gave her his hand in dismissal. "Good morning, Miss Ryan."

A little dazed by her success, she went out into the bright sunshine of the Avenue. She had not gone a block southward when she was surprised to hear a voice at her side speaking her name. It was Mr. Reginald Cheever, who had taken off his hat and was matching his steps to hers.

"May I walk a little way down with you, Miss Ryan?" he asked.

She glanced around uncertainly, aware of his quiet eagerness. For a moment she said nothing in reply, and walked on, her gaze straight before her, but he didn't seem to be in the least discouraged by her silence.

"Just happened to see you. No mistaking your hair," he went on easily. "It's rather gorgeous, you know."

She knew that he was lying, for the meeting had every mark of premeditation. But the compliment seemed to make the lie less culpable. And so she smiled faintly, wondering all the while what he had done with Mrs. Despard.

"I think you said something about my hair awhile ago," she returned calmly.

"I hope you don't mind."

"It wouldn't make much difference whether I minded or not."

"Yes, it would. I'll turn back at once if you don't want me to walk with you."

She glanced at him quickly. This was a specimen of the male that she had never met. She was curious about him. His cane and yellow gloves reassured her, and so she shrugged lightly.

"And haven't you as much right to be walking in the street as I have?"

He laughed. "Oh, say! Don't put it that way. I *did* meet you, didn't I?"

"Sure, and how would we be walking together else?" she replied.

He examined her profile with a new interest. Dark brown lashes veiled her eyes. There was something almost cherubic in her demureness.

"Do you like being a model?" he began again.

"I don't know. Not for men, I don't. You had no business coming in there."

"I hope you'll forgive me. I've never seen anything so lovely. It must be very trying to put on such pretty things only to have other women wear them."

She shrugged again but said nothing.

"I'm afraid you're provoked at my joining you on the street."

"Maybe I am. But my manners are too good to be telling you."

"Oh, I say!" he said, laughing. "You know how to look out for yourself. You're Irish, aren't you?"

"I was once. I've learned better since I'm grown up. Where did you learn to ask such a lot of questions?"

"Please don't think I'm impertinent. It's more interest than curiosity."

"I'd mind your being curious less than I'd mind your being interested on such short acquaintance. It's less personal."

"Oh, you *are* a rare one!" he gasped.

She stopped at the cross-street.

"That's a compliment, Mr. Cheever. I leave you here."

"Oh, say, Miss Ryan—please! Wont you let me—"

But with a nod and a smile she had slipped away through the crowd, leaving him feeling a good deal of a fool. It was an unusual feeling for Reggie Cheever. Women as a rule were not difficult for him.

Chapter Five

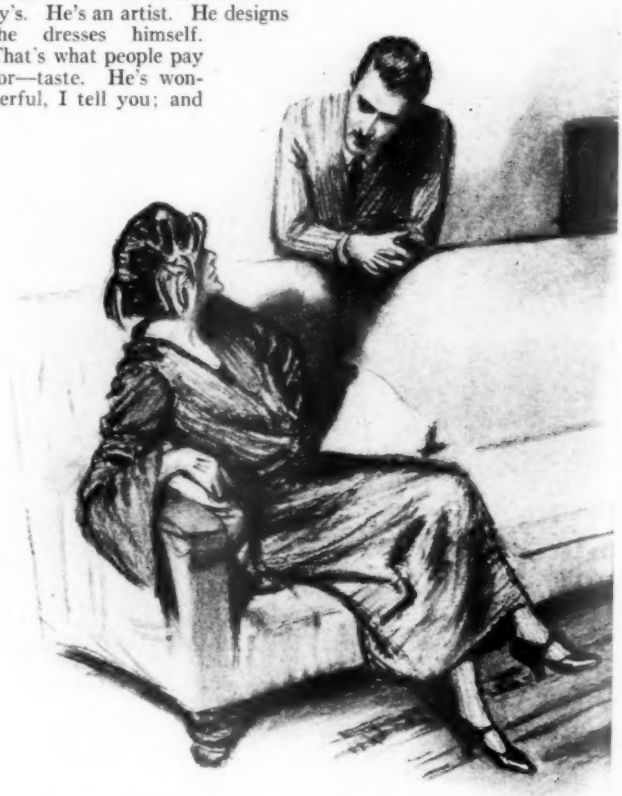
MARY RYAN had taken a step on the social ladder. Opportunity beckoned. All that afternoon her spirit dwelt amid rose and old ivory. Her elation gave her the courage to tell Mr. Wittmaier that she was leaving the Hygrade Company at the end of the week. He pleaded with her, even repudiated the disaster of Mr. Rose, and promised immunity from evening entertainments; but she was obdurate, telling him of the position that had been offered her. She left him phoning to Schuler's for her successor.

She went with Joe Bass to the movies that night. If he suspected any of her reasons for leaving the Hygrade Company, she said nothing to enlighten him. It had always been her practice, even at school, to eliminate from her mind as soon as possible the memory of her failures. Nor did she speak of Mr. Reginald Cheever. Joe asked few questions, because he was full of his own prospects. He announced with some little pride that he had sold his news-stand for a sum in cash—enough, with economies, to see him through law-school.

Mary listened to his plans and then told him of Alan Wetherby. The rose and old-ivory settings didn't particularly appeal to Joe; nor did her point of view on the career that awaited her. He didn't like the idea of any real live man calling himself by a French name—a woman's name, morever. It sounded to him as though this Wetherby must be a good deal of a sissy. Mary got angry at that, and told him that the whole idea of the establishment of Madame Denise was away above his head.

"Maybe it is," he admitted. "I guess you're already going ahead too fast for me. It's a game of graft, all right. You can't tell me any dress like the one you put on is worth six hundred dollars. Six hundred dollars! Why, Mary, I could pretty nearly pay my tuition with that."

"Maybe. But if people want to throw their money away, it's no affair of mine or Mr. Wetherby's. He's an artist. He designs the dresses himself. That's what people pay for—taste. He's wonderful, I tell you; and I wont have you calling him names when he has been so kind."



"I'd rather know you were pounding a typewriter at the Hygrade—"

"And stay a clerk the rest of my life, besides being—" She bit her tongue and was silent.

"Besides being what?" he asked.

"Nothing. I don't like those people. They're not my class," she finished airily.

"Yes, I guess I understand now. You think you've taken a step up in the world just because you're going to work in a place painted up like the lobby of a movie-theater, just because they talk in hundreds instead of just plain dollars, because they'll dress you up and paint you so that people can admire you. A model!" he said ironically. "Have you been working all these years at night just to become a dress model? Any little fool off the street can do that."

"Joe, please—"

"It's the truth. You think you've found the quickest way to meet the people who are going to help you. But you'd better

watch your step! Other girls have tried that,—Georgie Kurtz was one of them,—making a short cut to get up in the world; and you know where they've landed—"

"You're insulting, Joe."

"No, I'm not. I wouldn't bother to warn you if I didn't think more of you than I do of anybody else in the world. You're taking a job that will teach you the love of expensive things, expensive habits—things that I could never give you."

They had now reached the door of her boarding-house.

"I guess it's good-by when you go this time, Mary," he said quietly. "I can't see myself fussing around a place like Madame Denise's."

She had been angry while he was talking, because many of the things that he had said had come into her own mind, and she knew that they were true; but his last phrase softened her. She put her hands upon his shoulders and looked him in the eyes.

"There wont ever be any good-by for you and me, Joe," she said gently.

He caught her wrists and held them a moment before she took them away.

"Now don't be underrating me, Joe," she finished coolly. "I know my way about. Don't be afraid."

She had, in a word or two, given the keynote to her own confidence. She didn't want Joe to underestimate her, because she never underestimated herself. . . . .

On Monday Morning Alan Wetherby showed Mary a rather chaotic set of books dealing with different phases of his business. Miss Barnes, one of the saleswomen, kept them when no one else did. The system belonged to the dark ages of business, and Mary told him so, offering, with his permission, to put in a modern method. Wetherby demurred at first, but finally agreed to let her show him what she meant. It was child's play to the recent graduate of Schuler's, and she enjoyed his satisfaction when the new books were installed.

With September came the early migration of the fall purchasers, ladies with daughters to "bring out," preparing for a season of social conquest. Here Mary had her first lessons in the art of selling wraps and gowns as practiced by Madame Denise. She watched and listened as Alan Wetherby, or Mrs. Levitt, the head saleswoman, wove the web of their enchantments—studied their methods, their vocabularies and their manners. She liked the way in which large sums of money were so casually mentioned, and learned to feel regret when garments that she admired and had worn were sent away from the shop. She watched keenly, too, the demeanor of the visitors, learning in a short while to distinguish those who came from the hotels—small-town people as she called them—from the others who lived in the neighborhood of Fifth Avenue. She saw that Mrs. Levitt could distinguish the difference the moment they entered the door, and that her offerings were made in accordance with that distinction. Money flowed in; costumes flowed out; and in her quadruple rôle of accountant, stenographer, model and assistant to the saleswomen, Mary had plenty to do. Mr. Wetherby apparently had no regrets at having engaged her, and late in the afternoon sometimes talked to her while they finished the work at the books, which Miss Barnes had willingly relinquished to her for other tasks more congenial.

"Reggie is a dear," she went on, "but it does seem a pity when he flaunts girls of that sort in our very faces. Didn't you know, Gertrude, dear?" "Why shouldn't I know?" was the reply. "I introduced them."

In spite of his languid air and his super-refinement, Mary had grown to have a real regard for her employer. Indeed, as time went on and she knew him better, she learned that the contemptuous epithet which Joe Bass had applied to him did not fit Alan Wetherby in the least. She discovered that his manner in the shop was a studied pose in the interests of the business, outside of which he was entirely conventional, if slightly cynical, and quite human.

His interest in her even now was purely speculative. He admired the ease with which she adapted herself to the various tasks that were assigned to her. It would have been so easy for a young girl of her looks and inexperience to have been offensive to the older women. Mrs. Levitt gave her motherly advice; Miss Barnes helped her to learn the costs of the different materials; and Miss Benner, the forewoman in the sewing-rooms, gave her the opportunity to study patterns, and the way in which a Denise model was created. Wetherby was a busy man, but he found time to answer all her questions. He saw that she wanted to learn every detail of the business, both before and behind the scenes, and told her many of the secrets of successfully dealing with the credulity of vain women. *(Continued on page 156)*

The Laughing

By MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

Illustrated by Charles B. Falls

THE reader read, as he has been taught to read, with the modulated chant which the Church of England had adapted from the great Latin service. But the spirit of the man who listened was standing apart from the words he heard; it was standing in repose, in reflection.

It was a morning of early autumn. The huge, fashionable church was crowded to the very doors. Beyond the exquisite memorial windows, the sun, like a caress, lay on the fragment of parked country which had been selected by this exclusive social colony for its summer residence, and which had been pruned, beautifully, like a vine.

The man who sat on one of the altar benches of the church, with the secretaries of the British Embassy, was profoundly impressed. He looked like a fair-haired, sun-tanned English youth in the clerical dress of a novitiate of the Church of England, but he was in fact the very strangest of all those strange wards which the British Empire undertakes to train under English institutions to its will; having finished with Eton and Oxford, he was here as a summer guest of the Embassy at the country place it had taken some distance across the hills from the fashionable resort.

He sprang from the romance of a Buddhist crusade. When Dorjine, in the years before the Great War, persuaded the Dalai Lama that he could convert the Czar and all Russia to Buddhism, it was arranged for a Russian prince of the royal house to visit Tibet. This prince was given a young sister of the Lama for wife, and this son was born. And the English government, always far-sighted, undertook to shape this youth, under its influence, for the head of the Tibetan government, or Dalai Lama, in its high, celibate, monastic order—the oldest, the most rigid monastic order in the world, excluding women, excluding the thought of woman.

Fair-haired and sun-tanned, in his clerical dress of the Church of England, the youth was of today and Western in his physical aspect; but within he was of yesterday and Oriental; and this Song of Solomon, rich with the sensuous imagery of the East, profoundly impressed him.

About the man within the cool spaces of the church, the symbols of this vast Western religion were displayed—of brass, of silver, of gold, of silk softened like ivory, and wonderfully embroidered.

Old, studied in the moods of human emotion, and wise were the great religious orders that had put together this majestic symbolism—as though no sense could be omitted from this worship. It stood, with its devices, before every doorway to the human heart.

Peace, an immense security, was the promise of this service to the soul of man confused by emotions. And it appalled the soul that it would soothe and comfort. Its serene pronouncement, on every ecstasy of the senses, put the soul in fear.

Vanity! Even as the priests of Buddha had assured him.

As though the whole of all human experience had been examined! Age, crippled with failure, accepted the pronouncement; but

The amazed man, releasing the oars, put up his arm across his face like one who would ward off a blow.

Woman

The celebrated author of "The Corrector of Destinies," "Uncle Abner," "The Sleuth of St. James Square" and many other brilliant achievements here contributes something highly imaginative and wholly unusual.

Youth forever resisted, its white eager shoulder crowding against the door.

It resisted on this morning—not in vigor, but in a vague reflection. The man who listened to the service—the man in the first maturity of youth—was concerned with the experience of life about to be denied him.

What was this thing that he was giving up?

His confirmation into the celibate order of his Buddhist religion had been long planned, and was now, in reality, only a little way ahead. Until now he had not thought about it. He had gone carelessly, it seemed to him, like a child sentenced to a prison, with no thought, until the wall loomed at a turn of the road.

Vanity! How did *he* know that?

He had no experience of life. He had lived surrounded by Buddhist tutors, sequestered, like the virgins of the pagan rituals. The atmosphere of his great Oriental religious order had enveloped him—his acts, his will, the very imaginings of his heart. How did he know?

And as the voice advanced pronouncing the great love-song, human and sensuous, here, in the sacred books of this religion, the spirit of the man idled, curious, before the actual physical mystery that inspired these vivid extravagancies.

What was this love of women?

Upon it the sacred text fell back when it would seek an extreme expression; the language of this passion provided that text with its ultimate simile. And the expressions in this Oriental love-song were hot and dripping with life, fragments of the human heart.

Men using words like these had hold of something unknown in his experience—and to remain unknown! The fact, as though unrealized until this moment, suddenly appalled him. To remain unknown!

And all at once, as though the human mystery had but now suddenly appeared before him, as though until this hour he had never thought to examine it closely, he looked eagerly over the great audience.

Two persons, midway of the church, seated near the center aisle, arrested his attention. His eager glance passed before these two persons, lingered—remained: a man at middle life and a girl.

Here in its golden lure was the mystery he renounced. And the spirit of the man, standing apart from the deep, even, level voice that filled the remote spaces of the church, profoundly regarded her.

The girl, in every aspect of her, was distinguished: the white, smartly cut gown, the filmy hat, like a web in a frame of suggested color—every detail.

And her features were alluring and exquisite: her cloud of dark hair, beautifully outlining the symmetrical forehead; the line of the eyebrow above the clean-cut arch; the chiseled nose; the lovely mouth with its dainty color, and the short upper lip incomparably exquisite and sensitive, as though divinely fashioned for the ecstasy of every human emotion. And the rich color, vaguely shadowed

out, under the transparent skin, sown, as appeared to the eye, with gold flecks, was beyond any descriptive word.

She was the substance of everything lovely and distinguished. And the spirit of the man, awakened and entranced, suddenly realized that it stood here, on this morning, before an ultimate perfection of Nature.

A perfection of Nature!

The words instantly assumed an immense meaning. To produce this exquisite creature, the creative energies of Nature had been at work from the beginning, for so long a time that the human understanding staggered at the thought of it, and with an endless patience.

A perfection of Nature! But why had Nature labored to this perfection? And her great method was the mystery upon which the words of his Oriental order would presently, forever, close the door.

To some other man, under the lure of such an immense conception, this divine creature would go smiling, her arms extended.

The realization, sudden and vast, descended upon him as with the impact of a blow, and the heart in him staggered with a desolation. Exiled, excluded from this ecstasy, the life of his monastic order seemed a night of black loneliness.

If the other was *vanity*, what thing, appalling and awful, was this!

AND he was a man not at all lacking in attractiveness. He had the fine blond beauty of the Russian at his best. He was strong and virile, not unlike the fine figures of the Old Testament in their golden youth—David when he stood between the assembled armies with his sling; the sons of Jacob in the fields; or that one, choice and goodly, of which the Lord spoke apart in the ear of Samuel: "Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin—"

He had the curled yellow hair, the clean-cut features, the strong, proportioned body, the wide gray eyes and the serenity of these vague figures in the majestic legend. It was not possible for him to be unconscious of it. The glance, the arrested attention of women, everywhere, as with a pressure, reminded him.

He had been reminded on this very morning.

His way here lay through one of the towns to the south, and on the edge of it, in a wide meadow, a great circus with all its mammoth gilded paraphernalia was unloading—as though the wonders of fairyland were in exodus, the creatures of the Thousand and One Nights traveling out of Bagdad: a hundred white horses with their attendants; beasts, mammoth and dusky; and bespangled women.

They regarded him! And one he himself had regarded.

She lay in the thin morning sun on the top of a gilded wagon, her body prone, a bare arm extended over the border of the carved wagon-top. She too was dark, after the manner of this girl now exquisitely before him in the cool spaces of the church that the reader's voice filled. But the dark was rich and tropical, a wild, gypsy, passionate coloring—a flower of some soft southern country, hot-blooded and impulsive, not restrained, not bred out—luxuriant and free.

She lay close to the flat top of the gilded wagon as though her body caressed it, every contour soft and pressed into the lines of the carved top as into a mold that by some sorcery lovingly received it, lovingly longed for it and held it tenderly and firm as in the gestures of a caress.

Her hair was a cloud about a face that laughed, softly with no sound, a dimpled, luminous smile packed with deviltry.

By chance, it seemed to the man, as by the sudden invisible pull of a heavenly magnet, he had looked up at her. There had been no sound, no motion, nothing to attract his eye as he passed below her in the dust of the road. And yet, suddenly, as at a command of Nature, he had looked up!

And she had laughed that laugh without a sound, without, as it seemed to him, the slightest visible evidence of a motion, as one in some fabled garden might catch the face of a bronze, above a flowering vine, that laughed . . . . . He had not paused in his stride, nor spoken; there had been no word, no gesture. And yet the laughing face that followed him, regarded him; and his head, half turned, had remained her way until the wagon of the circus had as by a curtain removed her.

He had gone on in his long walk to join the secretaries of the Embassy at the morning service of this great, impressive, fashionable Western church.

And on his way here, like Judah on his way to Timnath to shear his sheep, he had met a lure. But unlike Judah he had gone on, leaving the lure smiling by the way.

But he had not gone on in peace.

It was the deviltry of the laugh that troubled him! Out of the inconceivable charm of what hidden mystery did this laugh issue? It moved something obscure and amorphous nesting in the very fibers of his body. The man was young; the taste of the apple of the Garden was unknown to him. But from the most mysterious, the most subtle impulse in the world, this cloistered innocence could not protect him.

Nature was greater than the Buddhist ritual. What amulet had his monastic order to stand against the deviltry of this laugh?

The activities of the mind cannot be measured by the ticking of a clock. These reflections, these vivid alluring pictures, these troubled memories, passed before him in a brief, a limited portion of time.

The Oriental in him vividly realized the imagery of the greatest love-song in any language known to us.

"How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!"

And to this man with the blood of Asia in him, these words had an object and a meaning. The prince's daughter was before him, here, wonderfully to the eye, this incomparable girl lovely and distinguished. . . . . Or was it that other, gorgeous and tropical on the top of the gilded wagon, the daughter of an Oriental nomad prince?

"Thy neck is as a tower of ivory."

Wonderful imagery, how it fitted to the lure! A tower of ivory! The white throat under the distinguished head, the sun-browned column under the face that laughed. How well the hedonist of Syria knew the word!

The reader's voice went on:

"And the hair of thine head like purple!"

Beautiful conception of an eye morbid for detail.

But it was true! Amazingly, inconceivably, it was true! He recalled it. Against the thin morning sun, the cloud of hair above the gilded wagon-top had a faint purple haze in it. And the hair of the heavenly creature before him, banked about her distinguished face, had a vague purple background in the light softened by the colored windows.

"How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!"

And with a great upward sweep the imaginings of his heart raced forward. What mysterious knowledge, hidden and packed with ecstasy, had inspired this sentence, this comment crowning the appraisal!

Night would soon come on.

THE man had returned through the hills, avoiding the road that he had followed on his morning journey. He wished, like every human creature, profoundly disturbed, to be alone. But he had not wandered in the open. He lay in the deep grasses at the wooded border of a hilltop. Beyond him, obscured by a forest, was the town that he had tramped through; and below was the bend of the great river, wide, marking the sweep of a vast arc of silver around the big shoulder of the forest extending like a giant's arm to the north.

It was hot—the sudden oppressive heat of an autumn afternoon. The air was heavy. It enervated the senses like a drug. And it remained hot as the night came on, as though the world had entered a stellar space occupied by an atmosphere heated and sensuous.

He lay at full length in the hot dried grass like one overpowered by an opiate. He seemed to lie without thought and without motion. But it was merely the illusion of inertia. The lotus-eater, his hands under his relaxed head, his limbs extended, and pressing the earth beneath him like a dead weight, gives to the eye this impression of serenity, of a lifeless indolence, that his heated fancy, burning within him, awfully negatives.

The man had not found peace in the open places of the hills.

Passion carried into a solitude is elevated to a tyranny. Nature, the great enchantress, presents her drugged cup, and after it is drunken leaves the victim in the sacred groves to his fancy.

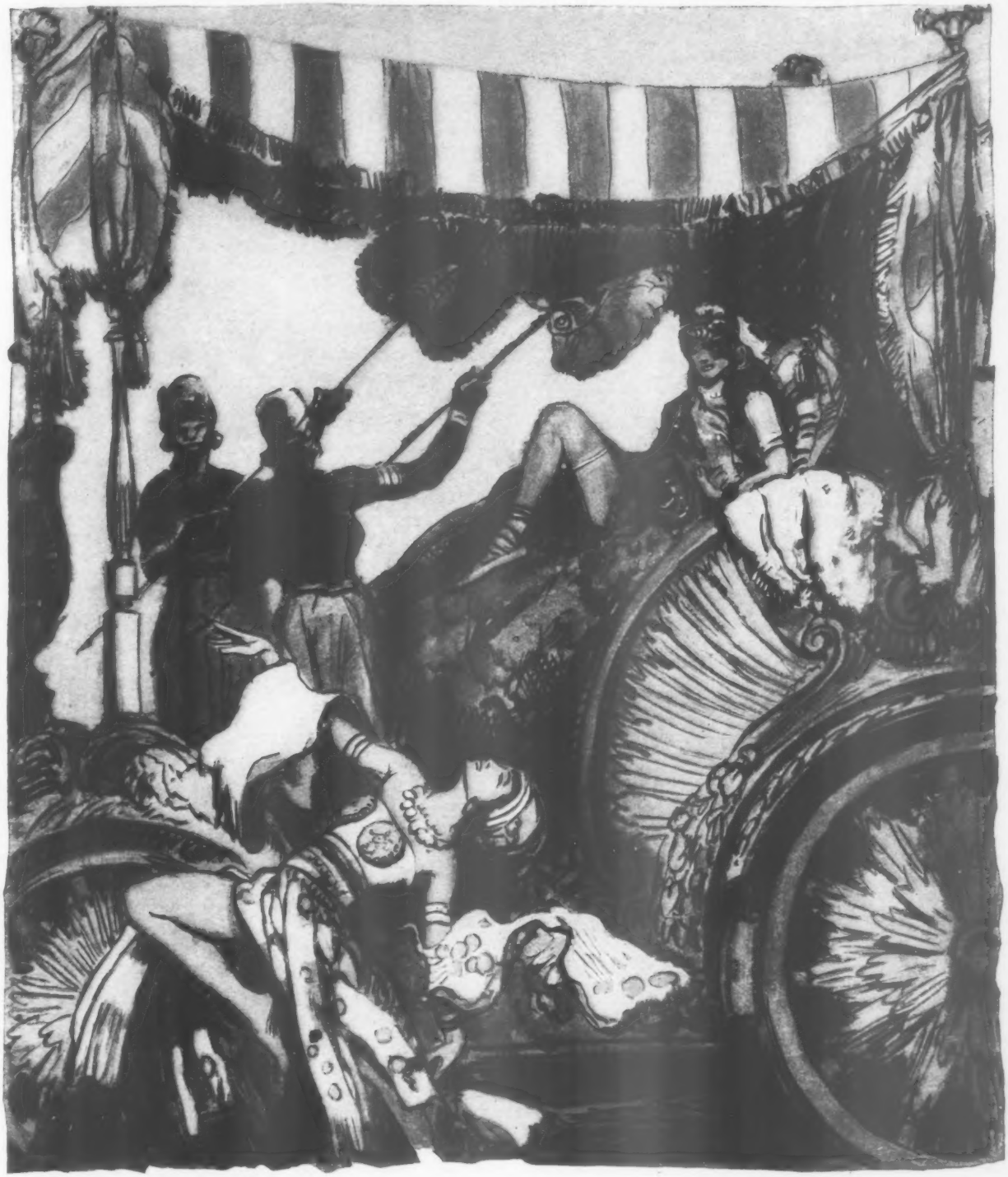
And on this day her drugged cup had been swallowed brimming. The man's fancy awfully assailed him. They appeared, these two exquisite women, in alluring visions. And so potent is the ancient drugged cup that in the man's fancy they had the aspect and the realities of life.

They were here!

If he turned his head, one of them came and stood behind him. And if he closed his eyes, the leaves falling on his face were soft hands that touched him. They changed, these two alluring women, blended, became one exquisite creature, the distinction of the one added to the golden deviltry of the other.

And very nearly that heavenly thing appeared!

Almost, to sight and hearing, it appeared!



On an immense float lay a woman under a great canopy. Beside the float a nimble creature leaped in the abandon of a wild dance.

With a supreme effort of the will, the man stumbled to his feet. In a moment he would see her, and his mind would go.

It was night. The world as by some trick of sorcery was in a blue hazy darkness. The man hurried, stumbling down the long wooded hill to the river, to the tiny boat in which he had crossed this morning when he had followed the faint path along the river to the highway skirting the town. Now returning through the hills, he descended to cross the river.

He was a long time, in the blue haze of the night, on his way down; he was haunted, followed; and confused, he kept losing the way.

The moon rose. He found the boat, released it and pulled out into the river. There was a form of light—the deep blue haze, dense and palpable, illumined by the moon as behind a cloud, enveloped the world.

He fled from an illusion that multiplied itself as in the facets of a brilliant, and peopled the night. And he fled in vain!

His boat was still obscured by the thick wooded growth that extended here into the river, when suddenly, with a great backward stroke of the oars, he stopped.

Laughter reached him!

His body lifted rigid, his fingers like steel. It was close beyond him, this laughter on the silver surface of the open water toward which his back was set. He trembled *(Continued on page 124)*

A dramatic episode of journalistic life, by the eminent author of "The Dark Flower," "Justice," "Strife," "The Forsyte Saga" and many other important works.

Conscience

By

JOHN GALSWORTHY

Illustrated by J. Allen St. John

TAGGART sat up. The hollow just outside the ranger's fence, cannily selected for his sleeping-place, was overhung by branches, and the birds of Hyde Park were at matins already. His watch had gone the way of his other belongings during the last three months, and he could only assume from the meager light that it was but little after dawn. He was not grateful to the birds; it meant more hours in which to feel hungry before a breakfast coming from he hardly knew where. But he listened to them with interest. This was the first night he had passed in the open, and like all amateurs, he felt a kind of triumph at having achieved vagrancy in spite of the law, the ranger, and the dew. He was, moreover, a Northumbrian, and his "tail still up," as he expressed it Born in a town, Taggart had not much country lore—at sparrows, blackbirds, thrushes, his knowledge stopped; but he enjoyed the bobbery the little beggars were kicking up, and except for a trifle of stiffness, he felt "fine." Anyway, it was useless to try and sleep again, now that his brain had begun to revolve the daily problem of how to get a job, and of why he had lost the one he had. . . . .

Walking, three months ago, burly, upright, and with a secure sense of jollity into the room of his chief in the offices of Conglomerated Journals, Ltd., he had been greeted with:

"Morning, Taggart. Georgie Grebe is to give us an article for *The Lighthouse*. He wont have time to write it, of course, and if he had, well—! I want you just to do us a column he could sign—something Grebeish. I'm anxious for a feature of that sort every week now in *The Lighthouse;* got half a dozen really good names. We must get it on its legs with the big public."

Taggart smiled. Georgie Grebe! The name was a household word—tophole idea to get him!

"Did he ever write a line in his life, sir?"

"Don't suppose so—but you know the sort of thing he *would* write; he gets nothing for it but the ad. The week after, I've got Sir Cutman Kane—you'll want to be a bit careful there; but you can get his manner from that book of his on murder trials. He hasn't got a minute—must have it deviled; but he'll sign anything decently done. I'm going to *make* 'em buy *The Lighthouse*, Taggart. Get on to the Grebe article at once, will you?"

Taggart nodded, and producing from his pocket some typewritten sheets of paper, laid them on the bureau.

"Here's your signed leader; I've gingered it a bit too much, perhaps."

"Haven't time to look at it; got to catch the boat-train."

"Shall I tone it down a little?"

"Better, perhaps; use your judgment. Sit down here, and do it right now. Good-by; back on Friday."

Reaching for his soft hat, assisted into his coat by Taggart, the chief was gone.

Taggart sat in his chair, penciling the signed leader.

"It's a good leader," he thought. "Pity nobody knows I write 'em!"

This deviling was quite an art, and not unlike art, poorly enough paid—still, not bad fun, feeling you were the pea and the chief only the shell—the chief, with his name and his controlling influence. He finished penciling, O. K.'d the sheets, thought, "Georgie Grebe. What the deuce shall I write about?" and went back to his room.

It was not much of a room, and there was not much in it except Jimmy Counter, smoking a pipe and writing furiously.

Taggart sat down too, lit his own pipe, took a sheet of paper and scrawled the words "Georgie Grebe Article" across the top.

Georgie Grebe! It *was* a scoop. The chief had a wonderful flair for just the names that got the public. There was something

The chief's face grew very red. "I pay you to do certain work. If you don't care to carry out instructions, we can dispense with your services. What's the matter with you, Taggart?"

rather beautifully simple about writing an article for a man who had never written a line—something virginal in the conception. And when you came to think of it, something virginal in the public's buying of the article to read the thoughts of their idol, Georgie Grebe. Yes, and what were the thoughts of their idol, Georgie Grebe? If he, Taggart, didn't know, nobody would, not even Georgie Grebe! Taggart smiled, then felt a little nervous. Georgie Grebe—celebrated clown—probably he hadn't any thoughts! Really, there was something very trustful about the public. He dipped his pen in ink and sat staring at the nib. Trustful! The word had disturbed the transparency of his mental process, as a crystal of permanganate will color a basinful of water. Trustful! The public would pay their pennies to read what they thought were the thoughts of Georgie Grebe. But Georgie Grebe had no thoughts!

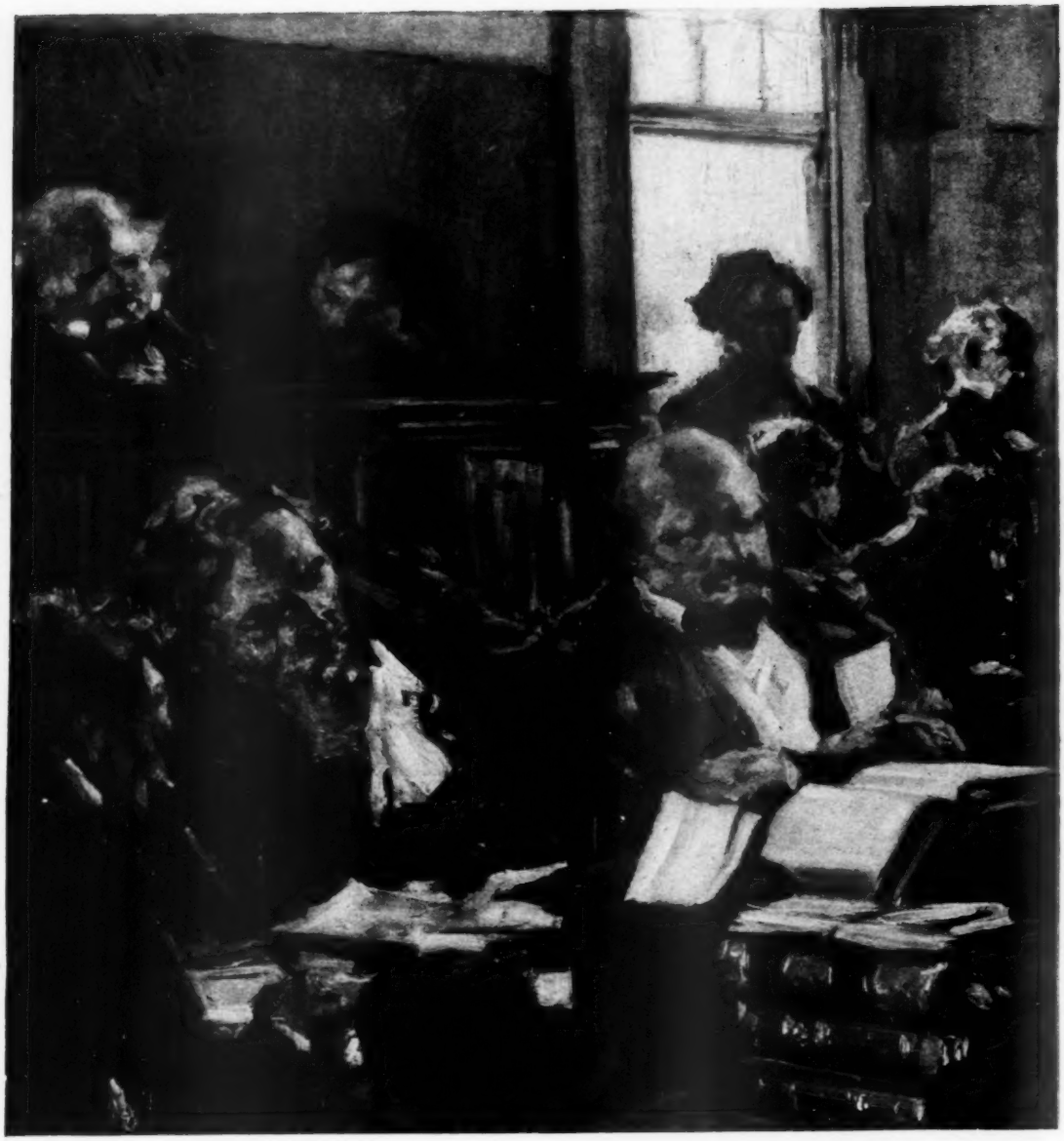
Taggart bit into the stem of his pipe. Steady! One was getting on too fast. Of course Georgie Grebe had thoughts if he signed them—hadn't he? He adopted them by writing his name—didn't he? His name would be reproduced in autograph, with the indispensable portrait. People would see by his features that Georgie Grebe must have had those thoughts. Trustful! Was the public so very trustful—when there was such evidence supplied them? Besides, Grebe would read his thoughts and cross out those that weren't really his—wouldn't he? Would there be anything fraudulent in what was left? Fraudulent! What the deuce made him think of a word like—fraudulent? This was just deviling; there was nothing fraudulent about deviling—everybody did it. Fraudulent! You might as well say those signed leaders which he wrote for the chief were fraudulent. Of course they weren't—they were only deviled. The public paid for the thoughts of the chief, and they *were* the thoughts of the chief, since he signed them. And yet! Would the public pay if those leaders were signed A. P. R. Taggart? The thoughts would be the same—very good thoughts. They ought to pay, but would they? He struck another match, and wrote:

"In coming before the public with these few reflections I fear that I usurp the province of others. I am not a writer; I am—you wouldn't believe it, ladies and gentlemen—a simple clown. In balancing this new pole upon my nose I am conscious of a certain sense of fraud—"

He crossed out the paragraph. That word again—must keep it from buzzing senselessly round his brain like that. He was only deviling; hold on to the word deviling; it was his living to devil—more or less. He was just earning his living—getting nothing out of it. Neither was Georgie Grebe—only the ad! Then who was getting something out of it? Well, *The Lighthouse* would get a good deal out of Georgie Grebe's name, just as Conglomerated Journals got a good deal out of the chief's name below the deviled leaders. Well, was there any harm in making the most of a big name? A frown came between Taggart's brows. Suppose a man went into a shop and bought a box of pills marked "Holloway" and they had been made up from a recipe of Tompkins—did it matter that the man thought they were Holloway's, supposing they were just as good pills, perhaps better? Taggart laid down his pen and took his pipe out of his mouth; something had risen in his soul. "Gosh!" he thought. "Never looked at it that way before! I believe it does matter—goes to the roots of commercial honesty. A man ought to get the exact article he pays for—it's beside the point that he never finds out that it isn't the exact article. Why, on such lines any fraud is possible. New Zealand mutton can be sold as English. Woolen stuffs can have cotton in them. This Grebe article's a fraud."

He relit his pipe. With the first puff his English hatred of a moral attitude, or "swank" of any sort beset him. Who was he to take stand against a custom? Didn't secretaries write the speeches of Parliamentary "big-bugs?" Weren't the opinions of eminent lawyers often written by their juniors, read over and signed? Weren't briefs and pleadings deviled? Yes; but to be honest, all that was different. In such cases the public weren't paying for expression; they were paying *(Continued on page 106)*

An eminent novelist and social historian here sets down the drama of one American house, of the fate-tossed, passionate folk who through three changing generations lived and loved and died therein. It has aroused a storm of discussion; for the strange events upon which the walls of Tulip-tree House looked—are they typical of all our lives?



Illustrated by Arthur I. Keller

Within these Walls—

By RUPERT HUGHES

The Story So Far:

THE plague had smitten old New York, and panic followed. Patty Jessamine was one of those whom fear drove to rash decision. Among her suitors were the dashing young engineer Harry Chalender and the steadfast lawyer David RoBards. When the disease had in succession killed an uncle, a cousin and her brother, then struck down her father and Chalender, her courage failed her and she fled to RoBards, crying: "Marry me, Mr. RoBards! And take me away before I die!"

"God knows how gladly!" RoBards responded. And arranging a hasty wedding, he drove off with her to his birthplace, Tulip-tree Farm, up in Westchester, beyond White Plains.

There they remained while the plague ran its course; and presently they learned that both Patty's father and Chalender had recovered. Somehow RoBards felt that it was the latter's return to health that pleased her the more; and when Chalender drove over to call from his home near Sing Sing, whither he had gone to recuperate, RoBards was sick with jealousy.

Chalender pretended a professional reason for this and other calls. The plague, he and others averred, was caused by lack of adequate water-supply in New York; he was examining the feasibility of a project to bring the pure water of either the Bronx, the Passaic or the Croton to the city; and when the Croton was

For five hours Webster spoke; his voice was an apocalyptic trumpet; his argument rolled along with the rhythm, the flood, the logic of an Iliad.

decided upon, he undertook a portion of the work. Because of Chalender's continued vicinity, RoBards gladly acceded to Patty's desire to escape the loneliness of Tulip-tree Farm, and moved with her back to New York.

They returned to Tulip-tree, however, for the birth of Patty's first baby. A few months later Patty enjoyed a brief interval of gayety at Saratoga. And the following year, after the birth of her second child, she plunged into the social whirlpool with an enthusiasm that provoked gossip.

One frozen night in 1835, RoBards was aroused by the alarm-bell and a flame-reddened sky. David hurried to his volunteer fire company. With Chalender and the others he did his ineffectual best to stay the flames, and on one occasion Chalender saved his life. Finally they had to fight the conflagration by blowing up buildings with gunpowder. And RoBards, with a marine-officer companion, sacrificed the warehouse of his father-in-law Jessamine, like the others. Patty forgave him in time; but her impoverished father was not appeased by David's long and futile endeavors in the courts to obtain compensation.

Years passed; the city was rebuilt; work on the Croton waterway progressed. Patty's third baby came—and died; so too a fourth.

Chalender was injured in separating two fighting workmen and was carried to Tulip-tree Farm. Sometime later RoBards returned joyfully home from a trip to New York—to find Patty in the arms of the convalescent Chalender!

RoBards could not bring himself to kill a wounded man; Chalender remained unaware that he had been discovered; and Patty's remorse seemed keen and sincere. So with the passage of time, and with the realization that but for his mercy toward Chalender his family would not now be happy around him, RoBards' anguish and bitterness abated.

And then—a new blow fell. Little Keith came crying to him that a half-witted youth, Jud Lasher, had carried off his sister. Near a lonely pool among the rocks, RoBards overtook young Lasher. Though he all but drowned the creature in the pool, he could not bring himself to the final vengeance; and upon Lasher's promise to ship aboard a whaler and never return to the region, RoBards spared him. He left poor Immy to the ministrations of his farmer's wife, and swore her and Keith to secrecy, for he wished to keep the knowledge from Patty, who was away.

But a few days later Lasher passed by on his way to sea, saw Immy and carried her off again. RoBards rescued her in time. And now he did not stay his hand. That night Keith was awakened by a noise, crept downstairs and led by a light from the basement, watched his father engaged in dreadful masonry—walling up the body of Jud Lasher in the thick foundation of the chimney.....Sometime later Patty learned what had happened.

About this time Patty met the great Daniel Webster at a dinner in New York and enlisted his aid in her father's claim for damages against the city. RoBards, who had pressed the matter for years, was humiliated to have it taken from his hands—but news from Tulip-tree Farm drove all other thought from his mind: a message from his farmer informed him that the chimney of his house had been struck by lightning. *(The story continues in detail:)*

THE mystery and terror of the sky-flung lightning were restored to their old power over RoBards' soul by the news from Tulip-tree Farm.

The lightning had suffered a distinct loss of social prestige when Ben Franklin coaxed it out of the clouds with a kite-string and crowded it into a pickle-jar. Its immemorial religious standing had been practically destroyed. To complete its humiliation from the estate of divine missile, a professor and painter named Morse had recently set it to carrying messages, writing dots and dashes, and racing back and forth along a wire like a retriever.

But now again it took the form of God's great index finger thrust from the heavens to point out the dead too safely buried in the walls of RoBards' home.

He could have wished that Professor Morse's lightning might have brought him instant news of the actual appearance of the shattered chimney. There was a wire all the way between New York and Philadelphia, but the far-writer had not been extended north as yet.

So RoBards must take the train. Fortunately the New York and Harlem Railroad had already reached White Plains, and he had only five miles more to ride on a horse of flesh and blood. His eyes scanned the horizon fiercely, and his heart beat with such a criminal's anxiety that he would almost have welcomed the exposure of his crime—if crime it were.

The first thing that topped his horizon was the great tulip-tree overtowering the house. Its lofty plume was untarnished. Some other tree, then, must have been blasted. Next the roof-line rose to view. It looked strange with the chimney gone.

As the road curved in its approach, he saw where the bricks were torn away, the clapboards singed with the streaked fire, and the foundation stones ripped open.

The farmer met him at the gate with cordial homage and a crude buffoonery more pleasant to his ear than the most elegant epigram, since it proved him still ignorant of what the walls contained.

"Thar lays your chimbley, Mr. RoBards," he said, "jest as the Lord left her. I aint teched e'er a brick, and I told the wife not to heave none of 'em at me when she lost her temper—so to speak, seein' as she don't seem to have ever found it, haw, haw, haw!"

"He will have his joke!" Mrs. Albeson tittered.

"A sense of humor certainly helps you through the world," said her husband as he took the horse in charge.

Mrs. Albeson waddled after RoBards and checked him to murmur: "Haow's poor little Immy?"

That eternal reminder hurt him sore. She startled him by adding: "Old Mrs. Lasher keeps hangin' about. More trouble! One of her girls has ran away with a hired man from the city, and she's more lost than the boy that's went a-whalin'. Ma Lasher prob'ly seen you drive past, and she'll likely be along any minute naow."

"Yes, yes; very well; all right," said RoBards, impatient to be alone. And Mrs. Albeson went back to her kitchen, taking her snub patiently.

RoBards studied the course of the thunderbolt and was glad that he had not been present to see it smite and hear it. He would probably have died of fear. He shivered now with the bare imagination and cravenly wondered if any thrill of it could have stirred Jud Lasher.

HE was so absorbed in this fantasy that he jumped when Albeson spoke across his shoulder:

"Looks like to me, the mason would have to pull the whole thing daown, shore up the walls, dig out the foundation and set her up all over again!"

"Nonsense!" said RoBards.

"All right! It's your haouse. Mend it the way you want to."

RoBards sent him to White Plains to fetch a mason, and remained to study the crevice that split the thick foundation as if Achilles had hurled his own unequaled javelin of Pelian ash into the tomb of another Patroclus. The fabric of the cellar wall was not opened all the way, but the wedge of the gap pointed straight at the burial chamber.

As he wondered how soon some casual inspector would follow the lead of that arrowhead and break open the wall, RoBards heard at his elbow that well-remembered querulous sniffle of Mrs. Lasher's:

"H'are ye, Mist' RoBards? Too bad what the lightnin' done to your nice house, aint it? But the Lord has reasons, I expect. Here he hits your home where there's never been any wickedness, and leaves mine alone, as if there had ever been anything else there.

"What I wanted to ask you was this, please: I was talkin' to you about the boy Jud goin' away to sea. Well, I aint heard a word from the pore child sence. Where d'you s'pose he could be now? Ridin' out on a mast, most like, or sinkin' in a whaleboat that some whale has knocked to flinders with one swat of his tail. A friend of my husband's was here recent, and he'd been on a whaler, and he told me terrible things.

"Pore Jud! There aint never a night but I pray the Lord to look after him and be a mother to him, but I do' know. Sometimes of nights I dream about him. I see him drowndin' and callin' to me: 'Maw! Maw, save me!' I wake up all of a sweat and tremblin' like mad, but his voice goes on callin' me. Sometimes it follers me all day long. I can see him out in that terrible big ocean—just one pore boy in all thet sea with nobody to call to but his mother. Oh, God, sir, it's no fun."

It would have been a mercy of a sort to end her nightmares with a word of assurance that her son would never die of drowning. But RoBards had his own children to consider. It seemed to him that a man must sometimes lie for posterity's sake. This legacy of truth he had no right to entail upon his children. He must take his deed and all its consequences to hell with him.

So there they stood, the murderer and the mother, staring at the very tomb of the boy. Perhaps those cries his mother heard were not from the width of the Atlantic but from the depths.

"But what I was gittin' at," Mrs. Lasher went on, "was my daughter Molly—a pirty thing as ever was, but wild! She couldn't see no future up here. Nobody wanted to marry her or be honest with her. And so one night she never come home at all. Where is she now? She's in a deeper sea, I guess, than her brother. Why should all my children go wrong? I was wonderin' if you could look for her or send somebody or do somethin'. I don't know anybody. But you know the town, and you're a good honest man if ever they was one."

If ever there was one! RoBards wondered if ever indeed there had been an honest man. He had meant to be one, but he had lapsed into the profound. And nothing so filled him with self-horror as his new and protecting genius in hypocrisy. What a Judas he was! To stand here and let the mother of the boy he had slain praise him, and pour out praise upon him! What a hypocrite this house itself must be! What liars those stolid walls, that embraced and concealed the dead, and even in the face of the denouncing thunderbolt kept their composure, and did not reveal the cadaver in their deep bosom!

He promised to search for the girl, and the mother went away comforted, to pray for her girl and to pray for the boy, and to pray for her kind friend Mr. RoBards. And God took her prayers! Had taken them and never given her a sign that the boy she asked all-seeing Heaven to guard a thousand leagues distant was lying immured at her feet! If Heaven could lie so blandly by keeping silence, no wonder men could perjure themselves by standing mute.

BY and by Albeson returned, along with Failes, the bricklayer. Failes wanted to tear the whole foundation away and start all over, but he yielded at last to RoBards' insistence, and charged an extra price for the surrender, and a further sum for beginning at once.

As an excuse for his haste, RoBards alleged the necessity of his presence in town. When Failes said that he didn't need any legal advice about layin' brick and patchin' stone, RoBards made other pretexts for delay. He dared not leave the house until the broken tomb was sealed again.

Days went racking by while the mason's leisurely procedure, his incessant meditation upon nothing at all, his readiness to stop and chatter with anybody about anything, drove RoBards almost out of his wits.

But at last the chimney stood erect again, dappled with new brick and crisscrossed with white mortar unweathered.

Then and then only RoBards went back to New York, to tell more lies to Mr. Jessamine, who wondered at his neglect of the necessary conferences with Daniel Webster and Benjamin F. Butler, whom some called "General" because he had been Attorney General under Jackson and Van Buren, and some called "Professor" because he was the chief instructor at the City University.

RoBards outlined the situation as he saw it, and they accepted

The unexpectable Chalender stupefied him by fastening his eyes not on Patty but on Immy, and daring to say: "The first nugget of gold I find in California I'll bring back for our wedding-ring."

his reasoning without a demur. They would also accept a heavy fee without demur.

The case was called in the Court of Errors in the City Hall Building on a day of stifling heat. There was something disheartening in the very air, and RoBards gave up hope. The counsel for the city objected to the reargument of the case on the ground that the legal principles involved had already been decided in the city's favor in the case of Russell *et al. vs.* the Mayor *et al.*

Old Jessamine knew nothing of legal principles, and RoBards could hardly keep him from popping up and blustering what he whispered to Webster:

"Legal principles? Legal bosh! I've been poor for ten years now, and the city has grown fat and rich, and it has no right to send one of its most honorable merchants down to a pauper's grave for no fault of his own. Make 'em give me my two hundred thousand dollars, or they'll murder me with their 'legal principles'."

Mr. Webster nodded his great head and agreed that Mr. Jessamine was right, but the law must take its course.

General Butler pleaded with the judges in their own language, and they consented to hear the case, though it was plain that they wanted only to hear Mr. Webster. They wanted to hear that trombone voice peal forth its superhuman music. The words would mean no more than the libretto of the Italian works sung at Palmo's Opera House.

Chapter Twenty-five

THE assembly was worthy of the suit and the amount involved. It thrilled Jessamine to be the man who dragged the metropolis itself to the bar of its own conscience, and demanded penance.

The court was large and stately. In addition to the three judges of the supreme court, and chancellor, the State senators were gathered in judgment under the presidency of the lieutenant governor.

The trial was as long as it was large. As attorney for the plaintiff, General Butler spoke for a day. Mr. Graham spent another day in defense of the city. Ro-Bards had his day in court, but his spirit was quenched by the knowledge that he was heeded only as so much sand pouring through the throat of the hour-glass. Webster, who sat and sweated and listened in silence, was the one thing waited for.

The news that he was at last to speak packed the courtroom with spectators. The day was smothering. The humidity thrust needles into the flesh, and the voice of Webster was like the thunder that prowls along the hills on a torrid afternoon.

For five hours he spoke, and enchanted people who cared little what words made up his rhapsody. His presence was embodied majesty; his voice an apocalyptic trumpet, his gestures epic; his argument rolled along with the rhythm, the flood, the logic of an Iliad.

For five hours Webster—well, there was hardly a verb for what he did. Patty said that Webster just "websted!" Her word was as good as any. Then the court adjourned for the day, and the spectators went out to breathe the common air.

The exhausted orator was led into the Governor's Room in the City Hall, where wine was brought him in quantity. He was soon refreshed enough to receive congratulations on his achievement. But he shook his head and groaned: "I was very uncomfortable. I felt as if I were addressing a packed jury."

The moan from the sick lion threw a great fear into old Jessamine's heart, and he listened with terror next day to the long argument of the counselor who spoke for the city to a much-diminished audience.

Waiting for the court to reach a verdict was worse than the trial. And the verdict was doom—doom with damages. An almost unanimous decision condemned Jessamine to poverty and decreed that he had no claim against the city.

A man fought with his shrieking Beggars threatened. Thugs, male cursed him for a "nob," but their

wife over a mug of bog-poteen, and female, glared at RoBards and brains were too drenched for action.

Patty ran to her father's side and upheld him, while her mother knelt and wept at his other elbow. But he was inconsolable.

He had counted on triumphing through the streets where he had shuffled. He had spent magnificently the money he was going to get. They hurried him home in a closed carriage, but he could not endure the calls of old friends and enemies who came to express their sympathy. He collapsed like the tall chimney the lightning had struck at Tulip-tree.

It was Patty of all people who begged RoBards to take him and her mother to the farm. Even she longed for obscurity, for she also had squandered royally that money that never arrived.

They left the children at home with Teen, and set cut as on a long funeral ride, with their dreams in the hearse. The journey by train was too public, and the railroad was a newfangled nerve-wrecking toy. So old Jessamine had to endure a hired carriage with a shabby driver who talked and spat incessantly. When they reached the farm at last the senile wretch was so racked of body and soul that they put him to bed, a white-haired whimpering infant.

Patty had just so much sympathy in her heart. When that was used up, you came to the bitter lees of it. She began to scold her father and at length produced a bottle of laudanum that she kept to quiet the children with when they cried too long. She threatened her father with it now:

"You big baby! If you don't stop that noise and go to sleep this very instant, I'll give you enough of these sleeping drops to quiet you for a week."

She remembered afterward the strange look he cast upon the phial and how his eyes followed it when she put it back in the cupboard's little forest of drugs and lotions that had accumulated there for years.

Her father wept no more. As she bent to kiss him good night, he put up his ancient arms and drew her head down and whispered, like a repentant child:

"I'm sorry, my sweet, to be so great a pest to everybody Forgive me, honey! I wanted to cover you with jewels and satins and everything your pretty heart could wish, but now—but now—I've lived too long."

"Now—now!" said Patty, kissing him again as she turned away to quell the sobs that sprang to her throat.

Doleful enough, Patty lay down at the side of her husband, who was even more forlorn than usual. She groaned:

"Oh, dear, such an unhappy world as this is!"

Then she sank away to sleep. She dreamed at length of hands snatching at her, of *Macbeth* and his hags about the caldron of trouble.

She woke to find her mother looking a very witch and plucking at her with one hand while she clutched at her own throat with the other. She kept croaking something with her toothless gums. It was long before Patty could make it out:

"Come quick! Your papa has k-k-k—your papa has k-k-killed himself—killed himself!"

Patty flung away drowsiness as one whips off a blanket, and leaped from her bed, seizing her husband's arm and shrieking to him to follow.

SLEEP was like a laudanum in RoBards' tired soul, and he stumbled drunkenly after his wife.

They found old Jessamine sprawled along on the floor. Near an outspread hand lay the bottle of soothing lotion. The cork was gone, but nothing poured from the bottle. It had been drained. The cupboard door stood open.

Patty and her mother flung themselves down and implored a word from the suddenly re-beloved saint. But RoBards knew that they called to death-deafened ears. He could not feel frantic. A dull calm possessed him.

The women's screams woke the farmer, and he was heard pounding for admission. RoBards' first thought was one of caution. He bent down by Patty and said:

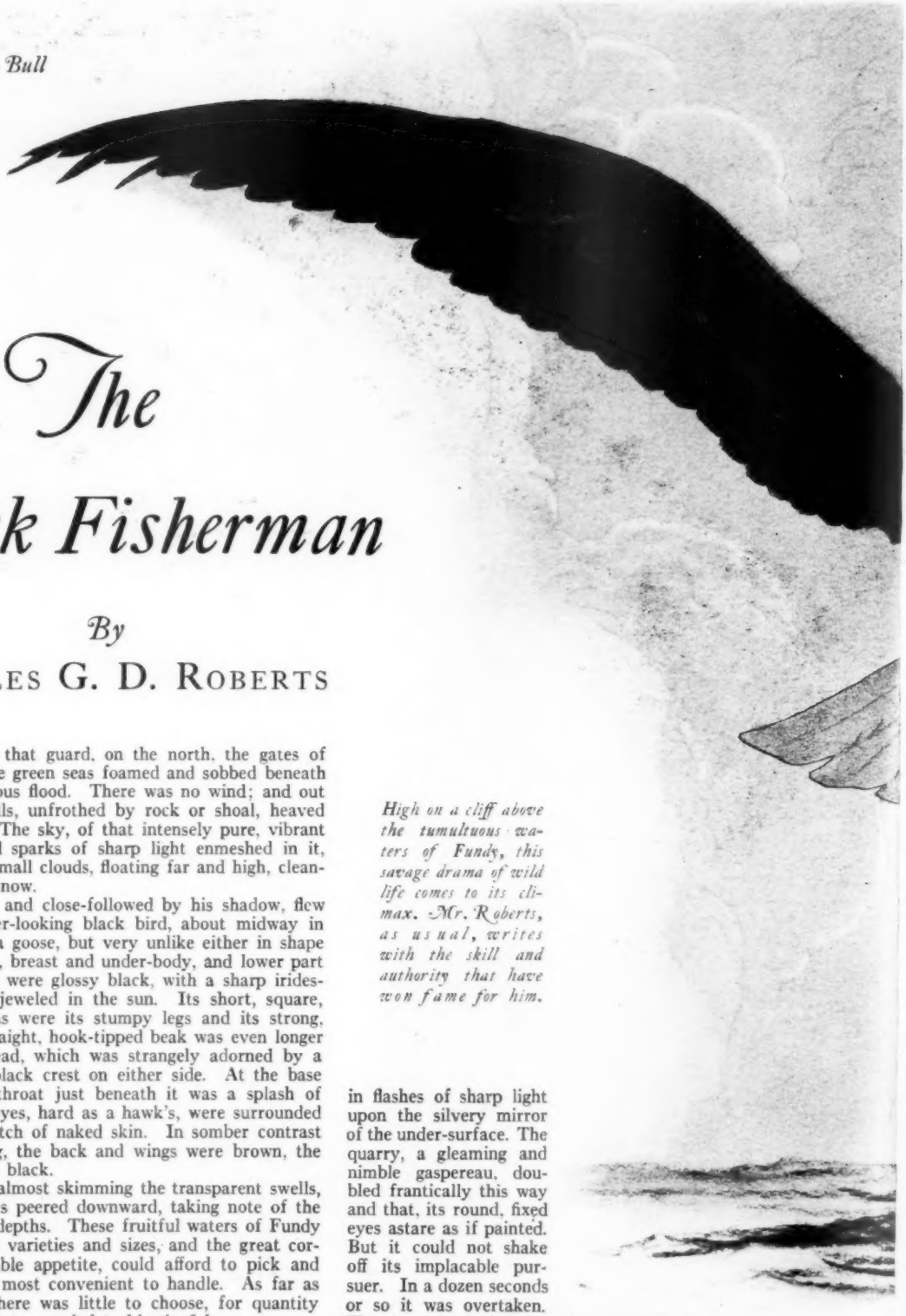
"We must get the poor old boy back in his bed. We mustn't let anybody know that he—that he—"

Patty looked up at him in amazement, and he felt a certain rebuke of him for being so cold-hearted as to be discreet at such a time. But she nodded and helped him lift the unresisting, unassisting frame to the bed. Then he went down and unlatching the door, confronted the Albesons with a lie of convenience:

"Mr. Jessamine has been taken very ill—very ill. Saddle me a horse and I'll go for a doctor."

There was a tonic in the privilege of action. He flung into his clothes, and kissing Patty good-by, ran down the stairs and out into the starlit deeps. He stepped from *(Continued on page 100)*

Illustrated by
Charles Livingston Bull



The Black Fisherman

By

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

ALONG the grim cliffs that guard, on the north, the gates of tide-vexed Fundy, the green seas foamed and sobbed beneath the surge of the tremendous flood. There was no wind; and out from shore the slow swells, unfrothed by rock or shoal, heaved gently, smooth as glass. The sky, of that intensely pure, vibrant blue which seems to hold sparks of sharp light enmeshed in it, carried but two or three small clouds, floating far and high, clean-edged, and white as new snow.

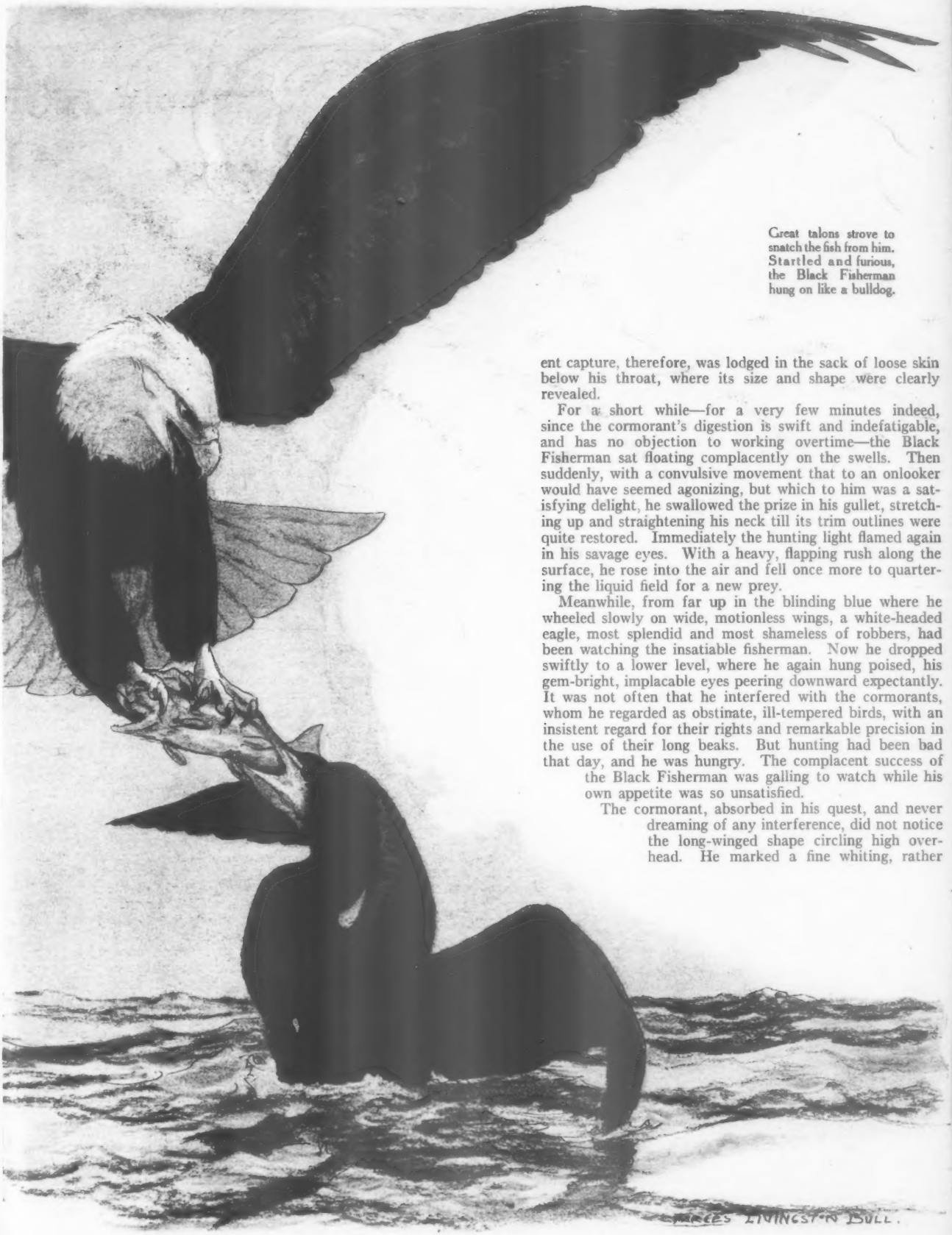
Close above the water, and close-followed by his shadow, flew slowly a large and sinister-looking black bird, about midway in size between a duck and a goose, but very unlike either in shape and mien. Its head, neck, breast and under-body, and lower part of the back, next the tail, were glossy black, with a sharp iridescence flashing green and jeweled in the sun. Its short, square, rigid tail was ink-black, as were its stumpy legs and its strong, webbed feet. Its long, straight, hook-tipped beak was even longer than the sharp, savage head, which was strangely adorned by a thin, backward-sweeping black crest on either side. At the base of the beak and on the throat just beneath it was a splash of orange; and the piercing eyes, hard as a hawk's, were surrounded each by a vivid orange patch of naked skin. In somber contrast to this impressive coloring, the back and wings were brown, the feathers trimly laced with black.

As the dark shape flew, almost skimming the transparent swells, its fierce, flame-circled eyes peered downward, taking note of the fish that swam at varying depths. These fruitful waters of Fundy teemed with fish, of many varieties and sizes, and the great cormorant, for all his insatiable appetite, could afford to pick and choose among them those most convenient to handle. As far as his taste was concerned, there was little to choose, for quantity rather than quality was what appealed to him in fish.

Suddenly he made his choice. His tail went up; his head went down; his wings closed tight to his body, and he shot beneath the beryl surface. At first he missed his quarry. But that was nothing to him. More fish than bird himself, now, he gave chase to it, at a depth of several feet below the water. Propelled by the drive of his powerful thighs and broad webs, by the screwing twist of his stern and his stiff tail, he darted through the alien element at a speed which very few of its natives could pretend to rival. From his wake a few bright bubbles escaped and flew upward, to break in flashes of sharp light upon the silvery mirror of the under-surface. The quarry, a gleaming and nimble gaspereau, doubled frantically this way and that, its round, fixed eyes astare as if painted. But it could not shake off its implacable pursuer. In a dozen seconds or so it was overtaken. That long, hook-tipped beak snapped upon it inexorably, and paralyzed its writhings.

High on a cliff above the tumultuous waters of Fundy, this savage drama of wild life comes to its climax. Mr. Roberts, as usual, writes with the skill and authority that have won fame for him.

Shooting forth upon the surface, the cormorant sat motionless for a few moments, carrying his prize crosswise in his beak. Then with a sudden jerk tossing it in the air, he caught it dexterously headfirst as it fell, and gulped it down—but not all the way down. The Black Fisherman's stomach was, as it chanced, already full. The pres-



Great talons strove to snatch the fish from him. Startled and furious, the Black Fisherman hung on like a bulldog.

ent capture, therefore, was lodged in the sack of loose skin below his throat, where its size and shape were clearly revealed.

For a short while—for a very few minutes indeed, since the cormorant's digestion is swift and indefatigable, and has no objection to working overtime—the Black Fisherman sat floating complacently on the swells. Then suddenly, with a convulsive movement that to an onlooker would have seemed agonizing, but which to him was a satisfying delight, he swallowed the prize in his gullet, stretching up and straightening his neck till its trim outlines were quite restored. Immediately the hunting light flamed again in his savage eyes. With a heavy, flapping rush along the surface, he rose into the air and fell once more to quartering the liquid field for a new prey.

Meanwhile, from far up in the blinding blue where he wheeled slowly on wide, motionless wings, a white-headed eagle, most splendid and most shameless of robbers, had been watching the insatiable fisherman. Now he dropped swiftly to a lower level, where he again hung poised, his gem-bright, implacable eyes peering downward expectantly. It was not often that he interfered with the cormorants, whom he regarded as obstinate, ill-tempered birds, with an insistent regard for their rights and remarkable precision in the use of their long beaks. But hunting had been bad that day, and he was hungry. The complacent success of the Black Fisherman was galling to watch while his own appetite was so unsatisfied.

The cormorant, absorbed in his quest, and never dreaming of any interference, did not notice the long-winged shape circling high overhead. He marked a fine whiting, rather

bigger than he usually troubled with, but too tempting to resist. He dived, pursued it hither and thither for a breathless minute or more, captured it, and shot to the surface again triumphantly, with the captive still squirming between his deadly mandibles. In the same instant, before he had time to dive or dodge, there was a hissing rush, the air above his head was buffeted by tremendous wings, and great talons, closing like a trap on the part of the fish projecting from his beak, strove to snatch it from him.

Startled and furious, the Black Fisherman hung on like a bulldog, stiffening his broad tail and backing water with his powerful webs. He was almost lifted clear of the surface, but his weight, and his passionate resistance, were too much for even those mighty pinions to overcome. The fish was torn in half, and the eagle sprang upward with his spoils. The cormorant swallowed the remaining fragment in fierce haste, blinking with the effort, and then sat and glared at the kingly marauder beating upward into the blue.

AFTER a few minutes of sullen meditation, and swift digestion, the untiring but still angry fisherman resumed his game. This time, however, he did not rise into the air, but swam slowly onward, searching the crystal tide beneath him till he marked another likely prey. Then once more he dived; once more he chased the quarry through its native element, and captured it. But now, instead of shooting out boldly upon the surface, he rose cautiously and showed only his head above the water. There was his foe, already swooping again to the attack, but still high in air. In a lightning gulp the cormorant swallowed his prey, down into the halfway-house of his throat-sack, and dived again, disappearing just as the robber, dropping like a thunderbolt, spread sudden wing and struck angrily at the spot where he had vanished.

As the eagle hovered for a moment, giving vent to his feelings in a sharp yelp of disappointment, the Black Fisherman reappeared some twenty or thirty yards away, and sat there eying his enemy with mingled triumph and defiance. He held his vicious-looking head slightly down between the shoulders, ready for a lightning stroke; and his long, efficient beak was half open. His sturdy spirit was not going to be browbeaten even by the king of the air.

The eagle, with snowy head stretched downward, eyes gleaming bright as glass, and great talons menacingly outstretched, sailed backward and forward over him several times at a height of not more than four or five feet, hoping to frighten him into disgorging the prey. Had the royal robber cared to push matters to a conclusion, he would certainly have been more than a match for the cormorant; but he knew well enough that he would not emerge from the encounter without scars, and he was not ready to pay any such price for a mouthful of fish. Presently, realizing that the surly fisherman was not going to be bluffed, he slanted aloft disdainfully, and went winnowing away over the cliffs to seek less troublesome hunting.

A few minutes later the cormorant, well pleased with himself, flew up to rejoin his nesting mate, on a grassy ledge just below the crest of the cliff.

UPON reaching the nest, the Black Fisherman alighted close beside it, and immediately sat up, supported by his stiff square tail, as rigidly erect as a penguin. His vigilant gaze scanning rock and sky and sea, the polished black armor of his hard plumage radiant in the sunlight, he looked a formidable sentinel. His dark mate, hungry and weary after long brooding, slipped from the nest and plunged downward to refresh herself in the fruitful gleaming pastures of the tide, leaving the nest and eggs to his guardianship.

It was a crude affair, this nest, a haphazard messy structure of dry black seaweed and last-year's gray mullein-stalks. Within the nest were four big eggs of a dirty pale green color, partly covered with a whitish, limey film. These treasures the Black Fisherman watched proudly, ready to do battle for them against any would-be thief that might approach.

In truth, the nest was in a somewhat exposed position. At this point the ledge was only about four feet wide, and just behind the nest the cliff-face was so crumbled away that any sure-footed marauder might easily make his way down from the cliff-top, some thirty feet above. In front of the nest, on the other hand, the cliff-face dropped a sheer three hundred feet to the surges that seethed and crashed along its base. Some twenty paces to the right, the ledge widened to a tiny plateau, carpeted with close light-green turf and dotted with half a dozen dark juniper bushes. A most desirable nesting-place, this, but already occupied to the last available inch of space by the earlier arrivals of the cormorant migration. The Black Fisherman and his spouse, tardy in their wooing and their mating, had lingered overlong in the warm waters of the South and been obliged to content themselves with such accommodation as was left to them. To their courageous and rather unsociable spirits, however, this was a matter of small concern. They had the companionship of their kind, but not too close, not too intimate—just where they wanted it, in fact. They were well fitted to hold the post of danger, to guard the gateway to the cormorant colony. Few other birds there were in that colony who would have had the mettle, bold as they were, to face the eagle as the Black Fisherman had done.

Those dirty-green eggs in the slovenly nest were now near their time of hatching, and so the mother hurried back from the sea as soon as possible, to cover them with her hot and dripping breast, setting her mate free to pursue his one engrossing pastime. A day or two later, however, faint cries and the sound of tapping beaks began to be heard within the shells; then the devoted mother would not leave the nest even for a moment, and the Black Fisherman had to fish for her as well as for himself. His pastime now became a heavy task, made doubly hard by the fact that the eagle returned from time to time to harass him. His method of foraging, at first, was to fill his own stomach, then his neck-pouch till it would hold no more, and then fly home with a big fish held crosswise in his beak. This was the eagle's opportunity. When the cormorant was in mid-air, halfway between cliff and sea, and flying heavily with his load, the crafty robber would swoop down and catch him at a hopeless disadvantage. Unable either to strike back or to resist, and mindful of his responsibilities, he would relinquish the prize and fly back home to feed his mate on what he could disgorge from his crop.

After two experiences of this sort, he gave up attempting to carry anything home in his beak and contented himself with what his pouch would hold. Thereupon the eagle, no longer tempted by the sight of an actually visible prey, and marking the long black beak all in readiness to strike, gave up molesting him. But the rest of the colony, less wary and quick-witted than the Black Fisherman, were continually being forced to pay tribute to the robber king.

WHEN the eggs were hatched, both parents were kept busy, the four youngsters being voracious beyond even the usual voracity of nestlings. At first they were but blind, stark-naked, ink-black, sprawling bundles of skin and bone, their great beaks ever wide open in demand for more, more, more. Their tireless parents had not only to catch, but also to half-digest their food for them, pumping it into their throats from their own stomachs, which were thus kept working at high pressure.

As the nestlings grew, which they did with great rapidity, their appetites increased in proportion; and when their eyes opened, there was an added emphasis to the demand of their ever-open beaks. The father and mother began to grow thin with their exertions. Then one day the fickle Fates of the Sea came very near to closing the mother's career and throwing the whole responsibility upon the Black Fisherman's shoulders.

The mother was down, far down below the surface, chasing a nimble sprat through the green transparency, when a swift and hungry dogfish, with jaws like those of his great cousin the shark, came darting in her wake. Fortunately for her, the sprat dodged; and she, in turning to pursue, caught sight of her own terrible pursuer. Straight as an arrow she shot to the surface; and then, with sure instinct, she flashed aside at right angles, thus evading, though only by a hair's-breadth, her enemy's upward rush. Flapping desperately along the water for a few feet, she sprang into the air with a frantic effort; and the jaws of the dogfish snapped just below her vanishing feet.

Somewhat shaken, the mother cormorant started homeward. But before she had gone halfway, she regained her self-possession. She would not return empty to her nestlings, confessing defeat. Whirling abruptly, she flew off far to the left, and resumed her fishing in a deep cove where that particular dogfish, at least, was not likely to pursue her. But the adventure had warned her to keep her eyes open, and on her return to the nest, she managed to convey to her mate the news that dogfish were about. It was information which that wary bird was not likely to forget.

Shortly after this incident the overworked parents were afforded a certain measure of relief, but in a form which was very bitter to them. One morning when they were both absent from the nest, and the nestlings, full fed for the moment, sprawled comfortably in the sun, a slender, long-tailed, gray-and-buff chicken-hawk came slanting down over the crest of the cliff. Its swift, darting flight carried it low above the crowded nests of the cormorant colony, but audacious slaughterer though it was, discretion kept it from coming within reach of the menacing beaks uplifted to receive it.

While the unequal combat went on at the very brink of the abyss, the Black Fisherman arrived.

The lonely nest of the Black Fisherman, however, left unguarded for the moment, caught its eye. It pounced like lightning, struck its talons into the tender body of one of the nestlings, dispatched it with a single blow, dragged it forth upon the edge of the nest, and fell to tearing it greedily. A moment more, and another of the nestlings would have been served in the same fashion, but just in the nick of time the Black Fisherman himself arrived. The hawk saw his ominous form shoot up over the rim of the ledge. With one thrust of its fine pinions, it sprang into the air, evading the onslaught by a splendid side-sweep far out over the depths. Then it beat upward and over the crest of the cliff, its bleeding victim dangling from its talons. With a croak of fury the cormorant gave chase. For half a mile he followed, lusting for vengeance. But his heavy flight, though strong and straight, was no match for the speed of that beautiful and graceful slayer. The hawk presently vanished with its prey among the dark tree-tops of an inland valley, and the Black Fisherman flapped sullenly back to his nest.

The three remaining nestlings throve all the better for the loss of their companion. They were nearly half-feathered before any further misadventure befell the nest. Then it came in an unexpected guise.

A WANDERING fox, far out of his accustomed range, came to the crest of the cliff and stood staring curiously out into the vast space of air and sea. There was a wind that day, and his bushy red brush of a tail was blown almost over his back. The cormorant colony was just below him. At the sight of it his eyes narrowed cunningly. Sinking flat in the grass, he thrust his sharp face over the edge, in the shelter *(Continued on page 127)*

Illustrated by Leslie L. Benson

Low Bridge

By MAXWELL SMITH

An alluring mystery and its unexpected solution, along with characters well worth knowing, make this unusual story by one of our cleverest writers most attractive indeed.

His dull gaze lighted on Fawcett. "The tree in the meadow knocked yer hat off. I seen it!"

TO Jean Mercer a tree was just tree. It consisted of wood, and during part of the year bore leaves—if it wasn't a Christmas tree and therefore ornamented with spiky things. Jean's knowledge of forestry was sketchy.

She studied the newspaper picture of the Tree some more. From the car window she searched the landscape for one like it. She swung her head to get a second glimpse of a tall lonely poplar as the train flashed by. That wasn't it. A knot of pines. She consulted the newspaper again. No. Nor did that clump about the farmhouse fit the bill; those, she reflected hazily, probably were apple or peach trees. She frowned on a shadowy cluster of mixed timber. The Tree's counterpart must be there, but it was too far for her to distinguish it.

Smiling, she looked again at the headline in the New York paper: "TREE ALONE CAN IDENTIFY THIEF IN RARE BOOK MYSTERY!"

There it was in three columns and in type five-sixths of an inch high.

Wasn't it enough to make anyone smile! A tree to identify a thief! How could a tree identify anyone or anything save itself?

Surely this was a good story. Jean never failed to applaud and enjoy these whimsical, bizarre touches that the reporters played up. They gave zest to many a tale which otherwise must have been flat and dull.

See what this tree had done for the Hemptonning robbery story! But for it, she would not now be riding into New Jersey on the Erie.

"Here's one of these freaks that you like, Jean," old man Saunders, superintendent of the Private Intelligence Bureau, had said. "Suppose you skip over to Hemptonning's place and see what you can stir up. He's a bug on grab-bag books, and he'll pay big if we can recover his junk. They say he's willing to give up the fifty thousand. If we can turn the trick, he'll be grateful enough to slip us half. That looks like your stuff, Jean. There's nothing much moving. Take a stab at Joshua's books. Get acquainted," he chuckled, "with his tree! Maybe you can teach it to sit up and beg! Seems to be pretty highly educated, according to these newspaper birds!"

"Appears to me," she had responded, "that the gentlemanly Mr. Fawcett is the one to get acquainted with. He listens smooth to me."

"Well, maybe." Old Saunders offered no further suggestions. Jean operated on original lines, anyhow. An ordinary old sleuth like himself could show her nothing. The thing to do with Jean was simply to turn her loose and let her alone. His own hunch was that she was off to a good start on her thought about George Harold Fawcett. Had he not been around, there wouldn't have been any talk about the tree.

"I thought it would appeal to you, Jean," old Saunders had concluded, "so I talked with Hemptonning on the phone. He says you can drop in—though remember, he doesn't care whether the thief is caught. He wants his stuff back; that's all. He's just crying to pass over the fifty thousand and call it a day! Of course, Jean, if you can rope the crook, well and good. But mostly you want to go after the stuff. Old Josh'll pay for that. He wont pay for the burglar without it. Run along, Jean, and look it over."

So, as Jean ran along on the Erie, she smiled at the outstanding rôle given to the tree.

There it was in the paper, a picture of the tree—a maple, according to the subcaption. Pictures also of the books, the house, their owner, of the man who insisted that the tree would identify the thief, of George Harold Fawcett.

The story was three days old. Jean Mercer's smile remained as she read, but her eyes grew thoughtful. Her interest in the tree increased. She never had noticed how many trees there were—hadn't realized how little she knew about trees, aside from the knowledge that they were of wood and grew out of the ground. What though the police did scoff and declare that the man who claimed the tree would corroborate his word was undependable? They quoted his admission that he had spent the night helping nurse a barrel of hard cider! Huh!

Despite the officially expressed contempt regarding the tree,

it still beckoned Jean. Old man Saunders would have given odds had he known that.

"A case of 'Tree to tell all!'" she murmured.

THE strange mystery of the Hemptonning library, which made the maple out in the meadow near the mansion almost as famous as the despoiled literary treasures themselves, followed by less than a week the arrival of George Harold Fawcett as a guest of the aged bibliophile.

George Harold Fawcett made the initial approach to Joshua Hemptonning with all the humility of the novice treading before the master. That was as it should have been. He was the puny aspirer craving a boon. The light of the entausiast glowed in his face. He really was a charming young man; and old Joshua warmed to him at once, won as much by the personality of his guest as by his avowed starved passion to dwell awhile amid these precious volumes.

"I envy you so!" George Harold Fawcett gestured expressively. They stood in the famous library which was supreme in its priceless collection of first editions and original manuscripts. "If only I could come here often—live here! I would—" He checked the fast-flowing words and smiled an apology for his presumption. His eyes, rich in mellow tints

which seemed to change in instant harmony with his thoughts, were shy. His voice grew softer, and he sighed: "It was good of you—I never can thank you enough for letting me come here today. It has been by far the greatest day I have ever known."

George Harold Fawcett placed both hands on the old man's shoulders affectionately. His earnest countenance became rhapsodical. To think that he had experienced the ecstasy of examining such a gem as the Fourth Quarto Edition of Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis"—to obtain possession of which Joshua Hemptonning had to buy an entire library! A volume which lately sold in London for seventy-five thousand dollars! To think that he had had in his own hands the exquisite Gutenberg Bible, the first example of printing with movable type, done on vellum and entrancingly bound. Rare editions of Cicero, Aristotle, Cato, Boccaccio, of Milton's "Paradise Lost," Spenser's "Faerie Queen," the Waverly Novels, Bacon's Essays, original manuscripts of immortal works in the writing of Hearne, Stowe, Thackeray, Buchanan, Hardy, Rossetti! The "good" Elzevirs—that is, those of the period when the brothers produced their most excellent type, including the magnificent "Cæsar" and the classical series of *petit format!* The first book printed in English, produced by William Caxton in 1474 at Bruges or Cologne; the first volume printed in England, the work of Caxton in a printshop he set up in an almshouse near Westminster! The first book printed in the United States, John Eliot's Indian Bible, which came from the Harvard press in 1639! The Cloverdale Bible, the first complete printing of the Scriptures in English! An initial copy of the King James' Bible! A manuscript of the Vulgate, the Latin translation completed in 405 A. D. by Jerome, which became the authorized Bible of the Western Church!

There seemed no end, no end at all, to these gems on which Joshua Hemptonning had permitted him to gaze for all too brief a spell!

"My greatest day!" breathed George Harold Fawcett. "I can never forget it!"

The master smiled benignantly, sympathetically. He understood.

"You can come again, my boy, of course—as often as you please."

Aside from his books, old Joshua was a rather solitary soul. Everybody did not look upon his treasures as he did; they rather bored many persons. It required the eye of the connoisseur to consider them truly—especially those that were frayed and yellowed.

Particularly was old Joshua taken by George Harold Fawcett's knowledge of one little-known fact—that only the tall copies of the Elzevirs are rare—those of more than a hundred and thirty millimeters which have escaped the ruin of the binder's shears and retain the uncut loveliness of their original form. Yes, George Harold Fawcett made a good impression from the outset, and Joshua Hemptonning decided that assuredly he should be encouraged.

"If you care to do so,"—the bibliophile's kindly gaze emphasized the spontaneous invitation.—"become my guest for a week or two. You've had no more than a peep into my treasure-house."

George Harold Fawcett's gratitude was splendid in its intensity. Impulsively he caught the old man fondly by the shoulders again. He was overwhelmed by his good fortune.

The only betraying feature in his expression was a momentary gleam in the dark eyes, but his host did not notice that. Old Joshua saw only the enraptured pilgrim to whom the shrine is revealed.

Thus did George Harold Fawcett win the confidence of the old man and gain ready access to the library through which he purposed enriching himself. He did not hurry. For days he maintained the pose of the devotee, handling just as lovingly as their owner the volumes that were without price, discussing their especial points of value in dress and type and rarity, hearing the tales of how the millionaire had hunted them out and bid higher and higher until they became his.

Not that these days were wasted time! During them George Harold Fawcett intrenched himself deeper in the regard of Joshua Hemptonning. More important still, he learned which volumes out of all the thousands were most highly prized by their owner.

The first step in consummation of his plan was taken in the middle of the night. He descended the stairs cautiously and opened a window in the library—that was all.

In the morning old Joshua scolded the servants and his librarian

for that open window. It had rained. What if there had been a high wind and the rain had lashed in on the books? He scolded the more when it was asserted that all the windows had been securely closed when the household retired. Apparently everything was in order notwithstanding the open window, however, with no harm done.

During that day George Harold Fawcett made note of the books he and Joshua handled. He took pains to keep his host away from certain volumes.

Next morning Fawcett arose before dawn. Pulling trousers and coat over his pajamas and putting on tennis shoes, he went noiselessly downstairs. Crossing the lower hall, he swung open the hand-carved oaken doors, black with age, which gave entrance to the wing of the house containing the library. Quickly he moved here and there, lifting from their velvet beds the most desirable and choice specimens in the collection.

And from each of the score of books he laid hands on he deftly cut various pages!

Five minutes, and the vandalism was done. The books all were in their accustomed places. The pages were in an envelope in his pocket.

Silently he passed out of the house. In the first light of the new day he walked briskly through the meadow that extended from the house to the highroad. There an accomplice was waiting in an automobile. To him Fawcett gave the envelope, lingering only to ask one question:

"Did you mail the letter?"

"Yes." The other started the engine. "It'll get here this morning."

"Right," nodded Fawcett, and turned back toward the house.

The streaking brilliance of the sun now filling the sky with blending, shifting hues, caught his attention. Over his shoulder as he walked, he looked back at the awakening beauty of the morning.

His steps led him beneath one of the four maples that dotted the meadow. His glance still was backward, admiring the sunrise. A branch of the tree brushed his forehead and whisked off his cap. He laughed as he picked up the cap. The tree had given him a reminder that this was no time for him to be sun-gazing. He would have to keep all his wits about him.

George Harold Fawcett reached the house and ascended to his room without seeing anyone. He believed that he had been unseen. He was sleeping peacefully when his host's man called him at eight-thirty.

AFTER breakfast Joshua Hemptonning received a letter. The opening words of the unsigned communication, typewritten on cheap paper, brought an exclamation of amazement and pain from the old collector. Fawcett sprang to his side, showing the utmost concern.

"What is it, sir?" he inquired anxiously. "You—you look ill." Gently but forcefully he assisted Hemptonning to a chair. Joshua Hemptonning *was* ill. The words he had read were like so many stabs into his flesh.

Weakly leaning back, he held out the letter. As Fawcett read, he also uttered ejaculations of bewilderment, consternation, anger.

He acted his part well, did George Harold Fawcett, considering that he himself had composed this letter informing Joshua Hemptonning that certain pages had been removed from specified books but would be restored upon his making payment of fifty thousand dollars!

Fawcett wore a sickly smile.

"It's a joke, of course, Mr Hemptonning. It—it is too absurd. Why, we've looked at these very books within the last few days. Some one surely is joking."

The old man sat up, his hands gripping the arms of his chair. He was pathetically eager, grasping at the straw that Fawcett offered.

"Let us see," he said shakily.

Fawcett put a comforting arm about him and helped him to the library.

The librarian, a mild, shrunken person, fluttered at sight of his employer's agitation. He jumped from his cataloguing, but Joshua motioned him away.

"You look!" he whispered to Fawcett.

George Harold shuddered. He gave the impression that what he was being asked to do would be akin to gazing on the corpse of his best loved!

"Let the librarian—"

"Please!" Joshua appealed to Fawcett. "You—let us know—the worst!"

To all appearance George Harold Fawcett was paying out the cord at the head of the coffin as he took up the "Venus and Adonis." Hesitantly he opened it. As he turned, his hushed tone confirmed what old Joshua already saw in his face.

"My God! It's true." Fawcett was staring stupidly.

TEARS came to the old man as Fawcett gathered up the other volumes and disclosed to him the full extent of the desecration. He clung to Fawcett's arm for support. The flicker of a smile appeared at the far side of that young man's mouth. Again he assisted his host to a seat. His concealed smile faded to a wry mouthing as the old man spoke.

"Why didn't they take the whole volumes?" he wailed as his glance went over them again. His hands beat feebly on his knees. "Why did they mutilate them—why! I'd pay anything to get them back."

"Vandals! Ghouls!" Fawcett overflowed with righteous wrath. "Yes! Better far that they had taken the volumes than this! They are worthless now," he groaned—but watched the effect of his words. "Worthless! And you paid thousands upon thousands for them."

"No, no! That doesn't matter." Old Joshua waved his arms. "They are priceless to me The pages can be reinserted. To me the market value means nothing—nothing. They are my books—mine!"

"I understand, Mr. Hemptonning; I understand." His plummet had found bottom. Had there been a streak of commercialism in the old man Fawcett might as well have quit then and there. He understood that the outraged volumes, through being cut, had depreciated to almost no value. Their worth had lain in their perfection He had proceeded in the belief that Joshua Hemptonning did not care what they would bring if offered for sale; but it nevertheless was a relief to find that his assumption was correct.

"Where,"—Joshua's voice quivered eagerly and he clutched at Fawcett,—"where does it say I must pay the money? Where?"

Fawcett made pretense of consulting the letter. Actually he was damning himself for having set too low a ransom and debating whether he could raise it!

"It doesn't say," he answered sadly. "That's what made me think it was a joke. There is nothing said about how the arrangement to pay is to be made. By Jove!" he made a deduction: "That's how the window came to be open night before last! The thieves entered that way! This letter was mailed yesterday afternoon in New York. They lost no time," he added grimly, "in making their demand."

"Yes; I suppose so," said Joshua absentmindedly. He was not greatly inspirited by that reasonable assumption. It did not help him toward recovery of the missing pages. All that he wanted to know was when and where to pay. He pulled himself together. "We must find out," he cackled feverishly.

"Doesn't it say anything about the payment?"

Fawcett shook his head. His voice lowered as a servant entered to dust the cases.

"I'd keep this quiet, Mr. Hemptonning," he suggested. "I wouldn't call the police. If you do that, the thieves may become alarmed and destroy the pages." He seemed horrified by the possibility.

Once more he played the old man right. Joshua was more than ever aghast. He embraced the idea of secrecy.

FAWCETT watched old Joshua narrowly. He must not put himself too decisively in the position of acceding without a fight to the demands. Should the happening come to the attention of the police later on, they might look at him with suspicion. He was practically a stranger to Hemptonning. It would not do to have the bibliophile relate that it was at Fawcett's instigation that the police had been left out. George Harold Fawcett straddled cannily.

"Of course," he said tentatively, "it might be better to put detectives on the case. There may be finger-prints. They might be able to trap the thieves while the money is being paid—although," he deprecated disingenuously, "you, sir, can judge best about that. If the pages were destroyed—"

"We must not risk that—must not take that risk," interrupted Joshua nervously. "We'll wait—wait till we know where to pay."

Fawcett's lids drooped to hide the satisfaction which made his dark eyes flame. If only he had not been so conservative in his price! Still, fifty thousand wasn't so bad for a quick pick-up. It would recompense for all the cramming he had done to become so expert on books!

"May I see it, please?" Fawcett jumped as Jean Mercer spoke. Silently he handed her the letter.

The servant wielding the dust-cloth gave him a thought. He might as well impress old Joshua with further evidence of sincerity.

"Perhaps some of the servants saw the thieves," he whispered. "We could ask them guardedly if they've noticed any strangers." He avoided the mistake of insinuating that any of them might be involved. There could be no sense in advancing the idea that this perhaps was an inside job. To distract from any such suspicion, also, he always referred to the "thieves"—never the "thief." Joshua was susceptible to suggestion.

"We could do that, but—" The old man sighed and looked up appealingly. "But what would it accomplish?"

"Well,"—Fawcett pursed his lips seriously,—"if we knew what they are like, we might notify the police after the pages are returned." He did not overstep himself, but fell in with Joshua's objection.

Joshua Hemptonning nodded. It was good to have this younger mind to see the affair clearly—to know what to do.

"I'm thankful to have you here, my boy," he was saying when Fawcett swung abruptly from him. George Harold muffled an oath. Here he had diplomatically squelched publicity and at the same time let that fool servant wander over to see the profaned volumes! The man was gaping at them as they lay open on the table. Fawcett snapped them shut under his nose. He was his gentle smiling self as he met the other's eye.

"Mr. Hemptonning prefers that nothing be said," he warned softly.

"Yes sir," said the man. "Yes sir." And he went on dusting.

But something *was* said. He told his fellows what he had seen. And that minor incident of the early morning in which the maple tree participated was revived to plague George Harold Fawcett—and attract Jean Mercer.

THE introducer of the tree — he who, according to the police, had the willies from too great intimacy with hard cider—was the handy man outdoors round the Hemptonning place. The statement that Zeke was not an intellectual giant was true. That concerning his relations with the cider was slightly exaggerated.

The tale was thrice garbled before it sifted into Zeke's ears from the chauffeur late that afternoon. Zeke had a narrow-gauge one-track mind. Since he had wabbled his way to his cottage at that day's dawning, he had been worried. He even had dreamed of this worriment.

Had the news been withheld from him twenty-four hours more, he probably would have grunted and let it go at that. As it chanced, the single-track had not yet taken on a new load. He retained that picture of George Harold Fawcett having his cap knocked off by the tree.

What, Zeke asked himself, had this guest been doing out at that hour of the day? Bucolically he chewed on that awhile. Then, being a conscientious animal, he determined that it was worth mentioning to his employer.

"What is it, sir? You look ill." Gently Fawcett assisted Hemptonning to a chair.

Fawcett was with his host, cheering him with predictions that they would hear again soon from the thieves, when Zeke entered. Fawcett did not remember ever having seen the man before, but Zeke by his very stolidity immediately placed him on his guard.

Before opening his mouth, Zeke, like the dolt he was, gave Fawcett a long, scowling scrutiny. His eyes measured George Harold to the last detail. He nodded heavily. Fawcett prepared himself for—something.

"I seen him out this morning," blurted Zeke.

Fawcett blinked quickly—once. He laughed and looked amused. "Remarkable!" he said good-humoredly.

Zeke stared at Joshua Hemptonning, who, with real trouble crushing him, didn't attempt to follow his hired man's inference.

"I seen him," repeated Zeke. He didn't understand his employer's apathy. He scowled again at Fawcett, whose shadowy eyes were inscrutable, though his mouth laughed.

Joshua squinted at Fawcett for a clue; Fawcett was his anchor. "What on earth is the man talking about?"

It would have relieved Fawcett to know. He professed unconcern.

"I haven't the least notion. Perhaps,"—he focused coldly on Zeke,—"perhaps he'll tell us."

"Your books are stole, aint they?" demanded Zeke with as much of impatience as his wooden nature permitted. "I seen him out this morning—early."

He waited for the light to break on Hemptonning. It did not. The old man surely was dumb.

Fawcett followed the lead. He was perturbed, but his poise was maintained.

"My dear man, what are you trying to say?" His brows rose as he glanced at Hemptonning. The latter was just getting an inkling of Zeke's insinuation.

"What was you doing out at four o'clock?" Zeke retorted.

For an instant George Harold Fawcett's breathing ceased. He fumbled with his watch. The face he turned to Joshua, however, expressed only incomprehension.

"I was not out at four o'clock," he said quietly. He considered Zeke seriously, then in deliberate words addressed Hemptonning: "What would this man be out for at that hour? If he is abroad so early,"—he switched the attack agilely,—"he may know—may have seen something of the thieves who entered the library the night before last!"

He grinned inwardly when it was evident that Zeke was puzzled. Zeke had heard nothing about thieves two nights before. He hadn't even heard of the library window being found mysteriously open.

Joshua again absorbed the impression so skillfully given by Fawcett. What difference did it make whether Fawcett had or had not been out at daybreak that morning? The theft had taken place twenty-four hours before that. But Fawcett said he had not been out. That settled it. It was wrong of Zeke to make such a gross attempt to implicate this earnest and worthy young man!

"You must apologize to Mr. Fawcett," the old man rebuked. "The theft occurred the previous night, but that is aside. You were mistaken in saying you saw Mr. Fawcett out this morning."

"I aint," said Zeke doggedly. He regretted having offered to help old Joshua, but he refused to recant. His dull gaze lighted on Fawcett. He pointed a grubby finger. "The tree in the meadow knocked yer hat off. I seen it!"

The length of the "Wh-a-a-at!" that issued from George Harold Fawcett was not all intentional. He was surprised—even jarred. This was more—far more—than he had bargained for. His muscles tensed, and there was less of the studious enthusiast in his countenance.

He took the boldest course.

"The man is insane, Mr. Hemptonning; or else,"—he paused, pressing his lips tight, as though reluctant to say what was coming,—"or else he *(Continued on page 128)*

"Y' onderstand," Cooney kept explaining, "it's a heap more harder to git that stuff across de river now."

The jocund chronicle of an imperious lady, a devious darky and a mysterious jug, told with twinkling eyes by the author of the famous "Old Reliable" and the "Sunflower Sam" stories—

HARRIS DICKSON

The Odyssey of 'Nias

Illustrated by E. W. Kemble

IN her new ancestral mansion, which climaxed the upper ether of Cherry Street, Mrs. J. Garner Wyndham lived and moved serenely, justifying the plaudit of admiring friends that from her brilliant conversation "you'd never suspect that Elizabeth Wyndham even *has* a servant." Of course not. Her superior mentality declined to think of servants, of expenses, of butcher-bills. Neither did she allude to her limousines or touring-cars, after the fashion of upstarts with their first flivver. Such things were so common, and Mrs. J. Garner Wyndham was most distinctly *not* a common person. She was a club woman, a leader of feminist thought, an authority upon families descended from the Conqueror, a proponent of culture, a patroness of charity and fine art; and since cutting loose from her kinfolks in Yalobusha County, Mrs. Wyndham became fixed as a planet in the rarefied firmament of aristocracy. Satellites might twinkle, but Mrs. Wyndham shone, dazzling, well-rounded, superb.

Ordinarily her own back yard stretched like a terra incognita behind the lady, who paid no heed to the rear—her business being to put up a front. All matters aft she proxied to her gardener, all except one solitary detail of the first magnitude, for nobody can trust *everything* to a negro.

On Wednesday morning Mrs. Wyndham went out to conduct this negotiation in person, a negotiation with Cooney Bug in the outhouse where corn and oats had been stored until the Wyndham state equipages began feeding on gasoline. Now the room was half-full of empty bottles, varied, of long accumulation.

A little more than fat, a trifle over forty and most extremely blonde, Mrs. Wyndham in very tight shoes minced her way to the feed-house. Within, a negro stood waiting, a black, apologetic and perpetually bowing negro, who received the mandate that she so graciously handed down.

"Cooney, I desire two gallons of the same."

"Yas'm—yas'm." Cooney's slewfoot scraped the floor and he bobbed his kinky head. "Out o' dat same ol' charred barrel?"

"Certainly. I specified *the same*."

"Sholy, ma'am. Co'se, I wouldn't fetch you nothin' else; an' he don't 'low nobody to git a drap o' dat 'cept you."

"It must be delivered here on *Friday* morning."

"Yas'm. But, Mrs. Windy—"

"Mrs. Wyndham—*ham*," she corrected; it had been always most annoying at public school to have the other children call her "Windy Liz."

"But y'onderstan', Mrs. Windy," Cooney kept explaining, "it's a heap more harder now to git dat stuff across de river now dan what it used to be."

The difficulties—of other people—never impressed Mrs. Wyndham; she merely repeated:

"It must be here on *Friday* morning."

"Yas'm—yas'm. I'll fetch it."

"Very good. I shall hold you strictly responsible."

Mrs. Wyndham saw nothing humorous in the Bug's responsibility. Not tarrying to argue, Cooney opened himself out like a stepladder and spraddled through the feed-house window. Disappearance was the Bug's long suit.

"Friday mornin,' " he mumbled to himself. "Huh!"

Cooney suspected that this transaction would require time. He couldn't cross into Louisiana, grab two gallons of reverend bourbon, and parade the streets of Vicksburg just the same as totin' the United States mail. He might wriggle like a moccasin among the swamps and bayous to where a certain person still hoarded his ancient remnant. Mighty few white folks could do that much, and no darkies at all—except Cooney. Night or day this might be simple to the Bug, who followed deer-trails and possum-tracks. But recrossing the Mississippi River and chaperoning a demijohn

into Mrs. Windy's feed-house was a maneuver that demanded generalship and genius. During the free-and-easy days Cooney had traveled back and forth from Delta Point to Vicksburg, propping his patent leathers on a red plush seat, tilting a cigar in his mouth, and importing eight quarts in a grip-sack. Those happy excursions ended when prohibition constables began to get his liquor and Cooney began to get thirty days, so rapid and regular that he shifted his patronage to the ferry, until meddlesome bulls contracted a habit of meeting him at the landing. Trip by trip the trade grew more ticklish. Even his unostentatious motorboat made such a fuss that Cooney now paddled a midnight skiff, and squinted around mightily before he stepped ashore.

No sordid process of transportation, however, reached the heights whereon Mrs. Wyndham permanently resided. It were unthinkable outrage not to have two gallons—and Mrs. Wyndham didn't think. For Mrs. F. R. M. Chester-Smith was to honor Vicksburg by her presence, was to be Mrs. Wyndham's guest—*the* Mrs. Chester-Smith, with three initials introducing her name, and a string of cap's behind it to signify one president-generalship, one international vice-consulate, and several important regencies. *The* Mrs. Chester-Smith, P. G. W. L.; V. P. I. W. C., was scheduled to arrive on Saturday, October 14th, at eleven-thirty A. M. At high noon the committee would escort her to Wyndham Terrace. At five an expurgated public would be admitted, by card. Men were to be among those present, and Mrs. Wyndham's smoking-room-salon might prove quite dismal without the famous Wyndham punch.

Her plans being so thoroughly matured in every detail, Mrs. Wyndham never contemplated the possibility of a hitch. Nor did she consider so obscure a mite as little Ananias. Once a lion befriended a mouse. Once Mrs. J. Garner Wyndham bestowed a second-hand toy wagon upon a diminutive black imp, the latest inmate of Aunt Cannie's orphan asylum. And verily, paths of the humble must intersect the avenues of the great . . . . .

Just beyond Glass' Bayou, just beyond the edge of old "Springfield," the far northwestern quarter where Vicksburg was born, Aunt Cannie's orphanage seems barely able to stand alone. It totters on a hillside above the bayou, like some melancholy souse who gazes down at a gutter and balances himself precariously to keep from tumbling in. The queer old garbage-picker had never bothered to inquire whether somebody owned the shanty. She just happened to find it lying around loose and took possession with her brood, as bees swarm into an empty hollow. And the conglomeration of plunder that she fetched home every evening naturally suggested its name, "The Garbage Can."

At gray dawn its door stood open. Out from the square black hole crept a round-faced, blacker boy. Jake, the biggest orphan, avoided every creaking plank in the gallery, stepped to the ground and drew a toy wagon from its hiding-place. His stolid face lit up as he gloated upon its dingy green body, with wheels that once were red. Instantly a smaller speck darted out from the doorway, and little 'Nias in a short-tailed shirt leaped upon him.

"Leggo my waggin, Jake. Turn loose!"

The bigger and clumsier boy paid no attention to this new waif whom Aunt Cannie had brought home last night. Jake moved on like an ox, dragging 'Nias along with his wagon.

"Leggo, Jake, I tell you. I fotch dis waggin here."

"Turn loose yo' own se'f," Jake retorted. "I got it fust."

This was proper and legal. Jake had got the wagon first, and claimed it, as he would have worn the first pair of breeches that his legs got into. At the Garbage Can nothing belonged to an individual.

"Dis is *my* waggin," 'Nias panted.

"Yo' waggin? Huh!" The scornful Jake kept traveling, while 'Nias tripped and fell; his shins were scratched against the bricks, yet he swung on manfully. One small fist clutched his wagon-tongue; the other thrashed about him until it grappled something at the woodpile. Then 'Nias let go and sprang erect with a rusty hatchet.

"Jake! Drap dat waggin! Sudden! Befo' I bust yo' crust!" A tense little skinny arm upraised, glittering eyes and snarling teeth, bluffed the larger boy.

"What you chillun quawlin' 'bout?" Aunt Cannie called from her doorway, a shriveled crone, most incredibly old, but spry as a dirt-dauber, and the only creature whom 'Nias feared. So 'Nias held his tongue until Jake tattled:

"Dis new nigger aim to bust my head wid a hatchet."

"Oh, no," Aunt Cannie smoothed it over. " 'Nias aint goin' to hit you."

"Yas'm, I is," 'Nias disputed, "onless he quits meddlin' wid my waggin."

Jake dodged backward and looked for lightning to strike the rebel. But instead of the expected thunderbolt, their oracle announced a brand-new doctrine.

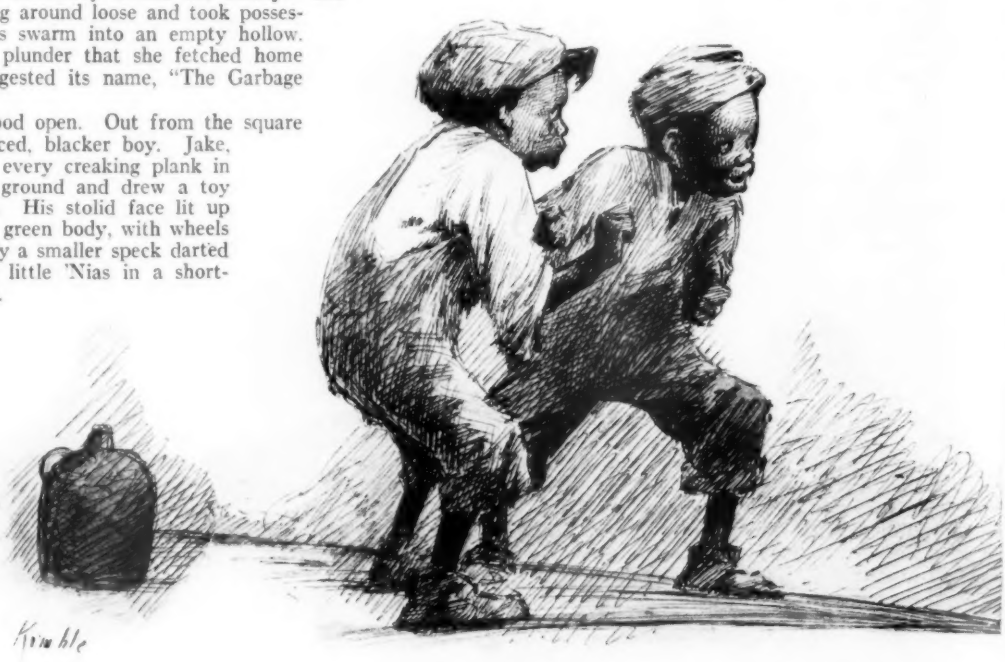
"Dat's right, Jake," Aunt Cannie agreed. "Mrs. Windy give 'Nias dat waggin. Co'se he'll let you chillun play wid it. But it's his'n."

"Yas'm." 'Nias stuck to it. "Dis is my waggin."

The police, who knew 'Nias best, and especially Officer Cronin, would never have believed that this tiny black pirate had got religion from the grace of one green wagon with red wheels. Only yesterday morning the exasperated Cronin had dragged 'Nias into court, where the judge didn't know how to deal with him. Nothing new could be done to 'Nias. They had exhausted all police inventions and novelties. His Honor couldn't hold a baby in jail and make people laugh, or turn 'Nias loose to terrorize the streets and make people kick. So he passed the buck to Aunt Cannie, who possessed a charm for managing incorrigibles at her orphanage.

Aunt Cannie had stopped with him at Mrs. Wyndham's, and the white lady had given 'Nias a cast-off wagon, his first lawful possession, which transformed the anarchist into a citizen of substance. Give the radical an acre, as they say in England, and he turns conservative.

'Nias never pestered his kinks about what they say in England and what was said in English made no dent upon his macadamized



head. Heretofore he had respected the rights of property only while its proprietor was sitting on it. Articles that were not nailed down he regarded as subject to appropriation. If 'Nias hankered for an orange, 'Nias simply took an orange from Tony's fruit-stand, or from anybody's fruit-stand, being a most impartial taker. And it seemed incredible that these habits of an eleven-year lifetime should be demolished by a wagon, and that 'Nias

overnight should become more ultra-conservative than the Constitution itself, recognizing neither law nor legal process by which a man could be deprived of his property. That wagon was *his*.

During his first obedient week at the Garbage Can, 'Nias had washed his face approximately four times, and minded Aunt Cannie, without once assaulting the peace and dignity of Vicksburg. Then somebody stole his wagon.

Tuesday morning the green wagon was reported missing, and ten wet-eyed orphans had one by one returned from ransacking the neighborhood. Like a row of mournful blackbirds they perched along Aunt Cannie's gallery, their faces smudged with dirt and tears—all except 'Nias, whose eyes were dry and little fists clenched tight.

"Don't worry, 'Nias," the old woman petted him. "Chillun is 'bleeged to play wid waggins in de street. Deir ma can't keep yo' waggin locked up in no 'frigerator. We'll fin' it."

And yet, hunting together like a brace of bird-dogs, they didn't find it on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. But Saturday morning, when Jake opened his blinking eyes, he let out a yell: "Git up, ev'ybody. 'Nias got his waggin!"

A flutter of excited shirt-tails flapped around the little black child who lay smiling in his sleep, and clutching the tongue of a wagon—not a green-bodied, rusty-looking wagon, but white as a new plate, with shiny red wheels.

"Whar'd you fin' it?"

"Who stole it?"

"How come dis waggin painted white?"

From her rough bunk in the corner Aunt Cannie listened to their questions, but failed to hear 'Nias say how he had recovered his stolen property, or who had painted it so white.

"I fotch my waggin home." That's all the information that they extracted from 'Nias.

"Anyhow, I'm glad you foun' it," Aunt Cannie nodded as she sat on the edge of her bunk and stuck two naked feet into a pair of men's brogans. "'Cause I promised Mrs. Windy you'd come dis week an' haul away dem bottles."

Spud beckoned. "Nothin' doin'," the boy refused. "Dis job is mine."

IT was Saturday morning, near twenty-four hours after the Bug had pledged himself to deliver a momentous demijohn. At eleven A. M. the reception committee would assemble for the purpose of going in a body to meet Mrs. F. R. M. Chester-Smith's train. A now indignant Mrs. Wyndham, massaged and marcelled and manicured, once more went mincing across her back yard in response to a mysterious signal from the feed-house. Before opening its door, she had framed a stern rebuke. Then on the threshold she stood and stared and gasped. The negro that waited inside was not Cooney Bug, but a totally unknown negro, who had never been accredited to Mrs. Wyndham, a rangy black man with gray derby hat in his hand, and a shaven, corrugated skull.

"Who are you?" She drew back haughtily.

"My name's Spud Hollins, ma'am, an'—"

"Why do you come here?"

"I'm Cooney Bug's pardner," he whispered.

"Oh!" Mrs. Wyndham lowered her own voice perceptibly and nearly closed the door before inquiring: "Where's my—my purchase?"

"I aint got it, ma'am."

"You will please inform me why?" Her brows lifted. "I instructed Cooney to deliver it yesterday morning!"

"Dat's so, ma'am; but things is happened, ma'am."

"No matter *what* happened, he must keep his word."

"Cooney aint in no shape fer keepin' his word," Spud blurted out, "'cause dem white folks is keepin' Cooney in jail."

"Jail? Indeed!" Mrs. Wyndham had heard of such places and supposed they must exist, for a certain class. "I shall not *tolerate* his failure."

"It's all right, ma'am; it's all right." The new negro put up a most ingratiating smile. "I fotch yo' demijohn across de river las' night."

"Then you have it? Ah, that's better."

"Yas'm—an' had a time wid it. Got it for you in a house on de levee, right now."

"But I required its delivery at *my* house."

"Yas'm." Spud hung his head and looked pestered. "It sho would ease my min' ef you had dat jeg in you' house."

"You must bring it here at once. *At once*, I say."

"Mrs. Windy, I'm skeered to fetch dat jeg through de streets. Dey's grabbin' niggers fer sech. Please ma'am, sen' you' autymobile an'—"

"Certainly not." She sniffed at the idea of her royal-blue, monogrammed limousine being seen at the door of a Levee Street dive. "You will return to that house *now*, and deliver my purchase *here—at once*."

"Yas'm. It'll be here, ma'am, in less'n a hour," Spud promised glibly; and Mrs. Wyndham almost smiled at this result of her natural ability to command. But Spud Hollins wasn't studying about the lady, for he saw somebody

Like a flying gull he skimmed between the Cotton Exchange and Mulberry Street. Then an auto appeared. "Look out!" 'Nias yelled.

A hundred people saw 'Nias lift the demijohn into his wagon. Spud's heart stopped, but 'Nias didn't. The boy went on.

else, somebody who really could do things. Through the door-crack behind Mrs. Wyndham he had glimpsed Aunt Cannie entering at the back gate, followed by happy little 'Nias, dragging his wagon.

The bootlegger's sudden change of manner warned Mrs. Wyndham of intruders, and she too saw Aunt Cannie approaching with the boy.

"They're coming here," she gestured nervously. "Get out—through that window. Don't let *any*body see you."

"No 'm." Spud's long legs straddled the windowsill, and his gray derby ducked out of sight as Mrs. Wyndham turned and opened the door to greet Aunt Cannie.

"Good morning, Aunt Cannie," she smiled affably. "And this is the nice little boy who got Cyril's wagon. How beautifully you have painted it!" Mrs. Wyndham always made it a point to flatter these lowly creatures by showing an interest in their affairs.

"Dis is him," said Aunt Cannie. "Mrs. 'Windy—"

"Wynd*ham—h-a-m*," the fretted lady corrected.

"Yas'm, Mrs. Windy*ham;* 'Nias is come to haul away dem bottles."

"Very good. Clean out the place. It has become an eyesore." Mrs. Wyndham gathered up the lacery of her skirts and proceeded to the porte-cochère.

Eyesore? The sight was good for sore eyes, and little 'Nias wouldn't have swapped fortunes with Ali Baba. Here was limitless wealth—cargoes and caravans and catacombs of bottles hoarded by the Wyndham dynasty.

"Hol' on, 'Nias, hol' on." Aunt Cannie checked his headlong zeal. "Don't dump dem bottles in yo' waggin, jesso. Tie 'em up in dis sack, so dey wont jostle out, an' you kin carry a big load."

"I kin tote a *heap,*" 'Nias bragged; "my waggin is stout."

"Pick dese beer bottles fust. Mr. Silas 'lows fifteen cents a dozen fer dem kind." After giving 'Nias a thrifty start, Aunt Cannie hobbled away, leaving the excited child to load his wagon. No sound came from the feed-house except the clink of glass, and the patter, patter, patter of bare feet back and forth to the door, until a voice whispered through the window.

"Sh! 'Nias? 'Nias?"

Although startled, 'Nias could never be wholly surprised by the showing-up of Spud Hollins when a fat hog was being cut. Without even glancing at the window he worked faster while Spud beckoned to him.

" 'Nias, come here."

"Nothin' doin'," the boy refused. "*Dis* job is mine."

"I aint atter rollin' you fer no job. Got sumpin' better."

Very critically the little negro paused and sized up the big one now framed in the window—new gray black-banded derby, white collar and red necktie in which a sparkler glittered but failed to convince. The experienced 'Nias had seen many a sport like Spud twirling his watch-chain on a checkered vest that wrapped itself around an empty stomach.

"Spill yo' news, Spud," he said.

"Come here. Lemme tell you."

This pair had sweated together through so many nocturnal complicities that 'Nias readily caught Spud's business proposition as communicated at the window, and agreed.

"All right. Same place. Now git away an' lemme haul dese bottles."

SOMEWHERE about nine o'clock that morning a very black boy pulled a very white wagon out of the junk-shop on Levee Street, after selling his first consignment of bottles. Had Officer Cronin seen him, he would have guessed that 'Nias planned an important *coup,* not from any visible agitation, but from the boy's total absence of concern. He trudged away, whistling, and never seemed to care who might be watching as he wheeled his wagon into an alley and halted beneath a previously designated window. Then he vanished inside this rattletrap house.

"Cops see you?" Spud queried anxiously.

"No. They warn't payin' no min'."

After moving a pile of boxes and taking up a plank

The syrupy stream stopped flowing. "Dat's all

in the floor, Spud lifted from its hiding-place a demijohn covered with wicker, which 'Nias saw was stopped by a corncob wrapped in brown paper.

"Wont dat leak?" he asked.

"Not much. Dis is 'lasses. Hide it under yo' sack, an' don't tarry to talk wid nobody. Keep travelin'."

In bygone days 'Nias had received these same orders so many times that he could begin in the middle and repeat them backward.

Before reopening the door, Spud thrust his clean-shaved head from the window, and his rolling white eyes reconnoitered in both directions; then a demijohn dropped into the wagon, and Spud's swift hand covered it with the sack—his maneuver being executed somewhat quicker than at once.

In this hill-and-hollow city of Vicksburg two conspirators need never be trapped together. They may sneak from their hiding-places by more different holes than are available to insects in a coral reef. So when 'Nias hesitated at the foot of Crawford Street, and gazed up the steep hill, a disconnected and uninterested Spud came slouching along from the steamboat landing. All the world could mark that 'Nias had nothing to hide. He kept the middle of the road, and flaunted his shiny wagon in the sun. Inch by inch the boy plodded upward, every turn of the wheels carrying his jug nearer to Washington Street, and the trailing Spud breathed freer.

The white wagon had now crossed Mulberry Street. On 'Nias' right lay the eminently respectable Cotton Exchange; beyond the Exchange, on each side of the street there opened an arcaded alley, and half a block onward, 'Nias would be comparatively safe. Just above the mouth of this alley, the tired boy stopped to rest, with wagon drawn crosswise the hill.

If 'Nias had kept on traveling, no calamity might have occurred. But he didn't keep traveling, for two other black boys came slouching out from the alley, two active members of his old gang, "The Bottom Buzzards," and hailed their missing brother.

"Hey dere, 'Nias? Whose waggin you got?"

"*My* waggin. White lady give it to me."

"Aw, come off," Punk jeered. "You swiped it. Lemme ride."

The three were oath-bound comrades, tied together by many versatile discrepancies of behavior; so 'Nias sat down at the edge of the gutter to gossip with Punk and Jim.

"Dat's a nice waggin." Punk gave it an envious jerk.

"Sho is," Jim indorsed. "Lemme pull her."

de 'lasses," he said. "Got a rag—an' a stick?"

"It *is* molasses," Cronin declared.
"Dat's what I tol' you," said 'Nias.

Three nappy heads were bending over the wagon as Spud Hollins sauntered nigh enough to give 'Nias a reminding kick, then passed on and stationed himself at the Citizens' Bank corner, where he could observe what happened.

The three boys kept seesawing their wagon back and forth until the sack slipped, exposing the neck of the demijohn. Forty feet away, Spud could see its corncob stopper, and other keen eyes saw it too—the flies. Bootleggers can fool the white folks on whisky, but nobody can deceive a Crawford Street fly on molasses. He detects genuine stuff the minute he bogs both feet in it. A buzzing swarm assembled around the stopper, giving the same testimony as that of a spider who once saved Robert Bruce. Anybody would have sworn to its being molasses. But Spud Hollins felt that flies were powerful uncertain witnesses in a case like this, when Officer Cronin came strolling toward him across Washington Street. Soon Cronin's eye must light upon the jug, and Spud would need an alibi. He tried to give 'Nias the high-sign of danger, but 'Nias didn't catch it.

"Aw, lemme ride," Jim kept insisting.

"Turn loose. Dis is *my* waggin."

Three wrangling boys rose from the gutter in a bunch, and tussled over the wagon-tongue.

At this point the city of Vicksburg had expended thirteen thousand and four dollars, and eighteen cents, for the malicious purpose of seducing little 'Nias; for the city had just finished paving Crawford Street like a brand-new toboggan-slide.

"Us sho could ride swif'," Punk suggested. "Plumb to de river!"

'Nias tingled, and his feet itched. Many a time had the forlorn waif stood envying white children who coasted downhill, then grinned happily over the privilege of shoving their wagons up again. For once, this glorious once, he possessed a wagon of his own, and the coasting-grounds lay free before him.

"Ef you's skeered," Jim taunted him, "I'll go fust."

"Who's skeered?" 'Nias scoffed. "Y'all stay here wid dis jug an' watch me ride. Den it'll be yo' turn."

The sight gave Spud Hollins a chill, and Mrs. Wyndham also would have shivered when 'Nias deposited his demijohn in the gutter. Lots of folks were passing—cotton men, draymen, bank runners, telegraph boys, loafers; everybody, including Spud, could see the jug; and anybody might pick it up, anybody except Spud. Suppose some fellow did take a notion to grab it—Spud couldn't even make a holler, and he began to consider eliminating himself from the vicinity, when Officer Cronin gave him such a look as forced the suspect to maintain his position.

With deliberate movements 'Nias prolonged Spud's agony. The boy fooled around and fumbled with the sack, getting it folded to make a cushion, while Spud sweated ice-water that steamed as it spattered on the sidewalk. The boy got into his wagon,

squirmed and got out again to arrange his legs more comfortably. Punk and Jim held the wagon; Spud perspired; flies swarmed; and Officer Cronin stood languidly at the corner.

"Hold her, Punk," 'Nias ordered, "till I gits fixed."

"Now? Is you ready?"

'Nias glanced down the long white slope, his eyes glittering with excitement, and two thin legs braced themselves.

"Hi, there, 'Nias! Stop! *Stop!*" Cronin saw what he was about to do as the boy gasped out:

"Let her go, Punk!"

She went—in a flash of white, a rattle of wheels, a stoppage of Spud's heart, and a thrill of exhilaration for 'Nias. He steered round an upcoming truck, and dashed by a frightened mule. Like a flying white gull he skimmed a clear sea between the Cotton Exchange and Mulberry Street. Then an auto appeared, moving southward at right angles along Mulberry.

"Look out!" 'Nias yelled.

A grinding of emergency brakes, a crash of glass from the auto's tail-light, a thump against the tires—a rebound, a somersaulting of the wagon, black legs and arms turning handsprings to the curb, and a limp huddle of rags lying in the gutter.

Men rushed to pick him up. Before the first could reach him, 'Nias had already performed that service for himself, also for the wagon. His lip was bleeding; an ugly bruise swelled on his forehead; and one foot left a smear of blood wherever he set it down. The car-owner, a jowly-jawed, badly scared white man, sprang out and ran back, calling as he came:

"Is the boy killed? Is he *dead?*"

'Nias had already told those first white men that he wasn't killed, and saw no sense in chewing the rag about it. So he never even looked up at this unnecessarily excited person, but kept turning each of his wagon wheels to make sure that none was broken. Then the automobilist got mad because his victim took it so calmly.

"Here, boy," he said, "you've gashed my car."

"Huh!" 'Nias countered. "Jes' look what you done to my waggin!"

Sullenly the boy took up his sack, and had set about wiping the scars from the fresh white paint when Cronin parted the crowd with powerful sailor strokes and found precisely what he expected, that the invulnerable pirate had survived. On sight of a uniform, Mr. Barker, who owned the car, began the usual explanations, which Cronin interrupted:

"That's all right, sorr. I saw this mix-up meself, and 'twarn't your fault."

"Then I need not appear in court?" Mr. Barker felt relieved, and gave exclusive attention to his shattered tail-light.

Such trivial details bored little 'Nias. He stanched the blood at his lip, and when Cronin wasn't looking, picked his chance to pull out through the crowd. He had already started limping up the Crawford Street hill, and would have got away but for a child's voice that squeaked from the Barker automobile:

"Oh, Papa, Papa! Look! That boy's got our wagon!"

Mr. Rudolph Barker rose from his knees behind the car, and stood in a fuddlement until his mind cleared.

"The wagon? Oh! Yes!" He rushed after 'Nias, grabbing the boy's collar and the wagon-tongue.

"Here! Give me this!" he ordered roughly.

The tiny negro refused to surrender, but grappled tighter with both hands and begged: "Don't take dis, Mister; dis is *my* waggin."

"It's not. It belongs to my children."

"'Taint, Mister. Dis waggin's *mine.*"

Immediately the crowd coalesced again around the struggling 'Nias, who writhed in the grasp of Mr. Barker. The man needed both hands, and loosed the child's collar, but couldn't break his death-grip on the wagon-tongue. For 'Nias clung to his property with fingers like twisted wires.

"Open up there!" Cronin broke through the ring to inquire: "What's the trouble, Mr. Barker?"

"This boy stole my children's wagon—last night."

"Didn't," 'Nias contradicted flatly.

The mere fact of portable property being missing was sufficient to convict 'Nias in any court of law; so Cronin also grasped the wagon-tongue and commanded: "Turn loose, 'Nias."

"Dis is *my* waggin, Mr. Cronin."

Between them Cronin and Barker weighed over four hundred pounds, while the underfed 'Nias weighed sixty. Yet their great hands contended vainly against his two little fists, and the crowd began to snicker. Cronin lifted his club for a rap at the stubborn knuckles; 'Nias saw the blow coming and shut his eyes, but did not flinch. The big Irishman hesitated. Time and again he had dispossessed 'Nias of stolen goods, and never before had the boy protested. 'Nias had always endured these seizures as purely formal proceedings, and his present attitude was disconcerting. Instead of rapping his knuckles, Cronin questioned the white claimant.

"Mr. Barker, are you certain this is your wagon?"

"Certain? My dear man, I painted that wagon *myself*. Took me two days. It's just got dry enough to handle."

"Dis is *my* waggin," 'Nias insisted without raising his head.

"Where'd you get it?"

That same question had been shot at 'Nias upon more than a thousand previous occasions; when 'Nias happened to get caught with swag, the police knew that some bereaved owner would soon be ringing up. So they formed the habit of first confiscating whatever 'Nias had, and then listening for the phone. Heretofore when cross-examined the boy invariably stood mute; now he spoke up promptly.

"Mrs. Windy gimme dis waggin."

Deep in his heart Cronin carried an Irishman's sympathy for the underdog. He wanted to do what was right, and something about 'Nias made him feel doubtful.

"Gents," he said to the crowd, "ye'll have to clear the street. Mr. Barker, you drive to the City Hall, and I can fix this in two minutes. Come along, 'Nias."

With a puzzled sweep of his club, Cronin opened their path and reached down for the wagon.

"Leggo, Mr. Cronin! *I* kin pull it. Dis is *my* waggin."

"All right. Go straight to the City Hall."

A grinding of brakes, a somersaulting of the wagon, black legs and arms turning handsprings.

WHEN the collision occurred, and everybody else went running down Crawford Street, Spud Hollins moved in the opposite direction, at first very slowly, with the intention of gathering speed. But he couldn't tear himself away from his demijohn, naked and unnoticed in the gutter. Spud's fingers tingled, yet he dared not pick up a sixty-day sentence. He paused; he glanced down the hill to see what happened, then edged nearer and nearer until he saw little 'Nias untangle himself from the crowd and come plodding up Crawford Street, still dragging his wagon. Spud began to sweat more liberally and began to hope again. Would 'Nias think of the jug? Would he take it in his wagon—or pass it by?

The up-bound crowd divided, some on either sidewalk, and Spud marked the position of Cronin. Now they were drawing near his demijohn, which lay in the gutter like an unexploded bomb. Marching nearly abreast, 'Nias in the street and Cronin on the sidewalk, they climbed the steep ascent. Without batting an eye, 'Nias pulled to the right, and a hundred people saw him lift the demijohn into his wagon. Spud's heart *(Continued on page 140)*

The beating had been merciless but administered in a passionless way, with the explanation that it was for his own good.

Ever dream of going back to your home town and showing 'em? Here's a spirited story of a man who did—by the author of "The Settling of the Sage."

The Fatted Calf

Illustrated by George Wright

By HAL G. EVARTS

"HOME again!" Andrew Baird exulted. "Home again after eighteen years."

Why is it that those who wander the longest and range farthest from home are the very ones who cherish fond visions of youthful scenes, the glowing picture unaltered by one detail? There is always that hope to return some day and find it all unchanged—a hope seldom fulfilled; for few can be so fortunate as old Conger Wade, for instance.

It is told of him that he left the little home village of Waconah on the banks of the Muscatine and roamed the far corners of the world for forty years. His camp-fire might be in the sage, the blasted desert or the pine-clad hills; but always, when in reminiscent mood, his talk harked back to the beauties of the hardwood hills along the Muscatine. Three strangers among the crowd that gathered one night at Wade's trading-post on the Mandan Trail were heard to speak disparagingly of Waconah, asserting that it was a dead town which the rush of progress had passed by, leaving it high and dry and aged among its more thriving sister cities.

Wade went into prompt and murderous action against these defamers of his birthplace, then handed his keys to his clerk and left. Ten days later he stood in Waconah and found it unchanged—the same lovely hills and sluggishly flowing stream. In his youth a wind-blown elm had toppled into the lane that led to the old homestead, retaining sufficient roothold to give it life, and the road to the house had veered crazily past it. Even the tree and the bend in the lane were as Wade had known them. Another ten days, and he appeared once more at the post, hung his hat on a peg and held out his hand for the keys.

"It was all a damn' lie," he told the clerk, "just as I knowed it was. She's the same good old town she was forty years ago—not changed a bit."

All of which is only to show that men run true to type, for Conger Wade departed this mortal sphere within five years from the day that Andrew Baird arrived at Wade's Crossing on the Mandan Trail and put the A. B. mark on the first ten head of she-stock that had ever worn that brand on the Mandan range. Baird's home town, Ridgeville, was but fifty miles from Wade's beloved Waconah; and perhaps the oft-repeated tale of the old man's visit helped to fan the spark of home love that the other felt. But for one reason or another Baird's contemplated visit to Ridgeville was delayed from time to time, and he had been run

ning cows in the Mandan strip for fifteen years before it was fulfilled. Instead of seven days by horse and three by train, as Wade had traveled, Baird had three hours by horse and two days by train—at least, that time would have sufficed to put him down in Ridgeville had he gone direct, but his way was roundabout and overlapped, and he lingered four days in Chicago awaiting the arrival of a trainload of steers that three of his hands were bringing through.

Eventually the steers were sold and the proceeds banked and Baird found himself on a train tacking swiftly back toward his birthplace. He gazed abstractedly from the window at the trees tinged by the touch of early frosts.

"Home!" he exulted. "Home again after eighteen years."

The clicking of the rails brought to mind the contrast between his departure on the rods of a freight-train at the age of seventeen, and his home-coming in the luxurious seat of a Pullman. It recalled, too, the beating at the hands of his brother William, five years his senior, that had occasioned his running away from home. The elder Baird had been a thrifty man, and hard, and he had endeavored to raise his two motherless sons according to his own stern, uncompromising code. But there had been a difference between the boys, the best evidence of the fact being that young and old referred to the one as Andy, while even in his youth the elder brother had never once been hailed familiarly as Bill. William had never called reproach upon the name of Baird. He had been as steady and hardworking as the father—and as close; but Andy had sometimes strayed from the path of grace by fishing for bullheads when supposed to be in school, and later, when he had been sternly assigned to more profitable employment for the day. It had been while the father was away on a brief business trip that William, temporary head of the house, had chastised Andy for willful misunderstanding of orders and straying into the woods to search for squirrels when he should have been shucking corn. The beating had been merciless but administered in the cold, passionless way of his father, and with the same calm aftermath of righteously pointed morals and the unvarying explanation that it was for his own best good. And the next night the youth had dropped from his window, walked to town and crawled in upon the rods of a departing train.

BUT time had left to Andrew Baird only the more treasured memories of his old home, and as the train neared Ridgeville, on that return, he was in a mellow mood and as excited as a boy on his first trip. He had obtained a week-old copy of his home-town paper, the Ridgeville Weekly *Gleaner*, from the train-boy, and eagerly perused its contents. The last item he read before the train whistled for the town concerned a fat yearling calf that had strayed from home on the Wendel place, nine miles from Ridgeville; five dollars reward.

Baird was the first of three alighting passengers to leave the train, and he looked anxiously about for a familiar face. A decrepit bus stood backed up to the platform, and Baird started as the driver announced that his was the vehicle for the Maple Leaf, Ridgeville's best hostelry. It was the same voice that he had listened to in the past when he had slipped furtively down to watch the trains go by and to ponder over the strange places they must pass through. The stooped man who extolled the virtues of the Maple Leaf was the same old Linn Watkins. Baird held out his hand.

"Shake, Linn," he hailed. "You haven't changed any to speak of since I left—grayed up a little round the horns, maybe, but that's all the difference I can see. Say you're glad to see me, Linn."

Watkins peered long at him.

"Why, it's Andy," he said at last. "Little Andy Baird! Sho now! Who'd have reckoned to see you again? Why, yes, Andy, I'm right glad to see you back. I hope you've done as well as William has. He's come to be real well fixed."

Baird indicated his pile of luggage.

"Just take those traps up to the hotel, Linn," he said. "I'll be up there in a while, but first I want to prowl around a bit." He tossed a fur coat to the bus-driver. "Guess I'll have you take that too—it's too warm to pack, this kind of a day. I declare I'm glad to see you, Linn." He extracted a crisp bill and handed it to the old man. "There's part payment for all those free rides you staked me to as a kid." Baird chuckled joyously at some new recollection. "But don't you go and tell William that I've been riding round with you again," he added. "He's liable to romp into town and take it out of me."

He turned and strode away, and after perhaps a minute Linn shook his head and made answer to that last remark:

"He might, at that," he said.

AS Baird wandered through the residence part of town, he found it little changed; here and there a new tree, two strange cottages on Tollver Street and four on Anson Avenue; the board sidewalk on Tennyson had been replaced by brick, and a few more like improvements made; but for the most part the place was unaltered.

The sight of a woman entering a house some distance down the street roused a latent sentiment in him. He wondered if Hilda Ransome still lived in Ridgeville.

Baird's life had been a busy one; until recent years few women had made their homes in the Mandan country, and those few, as well as those who came later, had married before coming out; as a result, his association with the gentler sex had been extremely limited. During his last year at home he had frequently neglected his duties at chore-time for the more pleasant task of squiring the pretty Hilda home from school; now he chuckled over the memory of those delightful truancies; and he likewise recalled the penalties exacted after reaching home—for William, dutiful boy that he was, had invariably learned the reason for his brother's tardiness and relayed the information to the head of the house.

As he thought of this, Baird decided against walking out to the place to greet his brother, as had been his original intent. That could wait until evening. He had so many old friends to hunt up in town.

He came to the end of a street and looked long at a big white house that stood well back in a wonderful grove of elms and oaks. The Creighton place! That house had once stood as a symbol of many things to Andy Baird: power, prosperity, respect—the biggest house in town, as Judge Creighton had been its biggest figure, the most influential citizen in the county. It had even been rumored that he was sometimes consulted on matters of State politics. Baird remembered that it was in connection with the Judge's house that he had discovered the one evidence of human weakness and envy in William's make-up. The elder brother had announced that some day he would buy the Creighton place and live in it himself. Andy now remembered that he himself, on that night of his departure, had resolved to return some day and buy the Judge's holdings and so thwart the only ambition his brother had ever expressed—that this desire had persisted for a number of years but had gradually dulled until he had not seriously considered it for a decade and only now recalled it.

The house had been built in the boom, a triumph of architecture liberally besprinkled with cupolas and spires, but it now looked a trifle old-fashioned, and Baird smiled at his youthful notion that the height of all human desires would be realized by living in so pretentious a place as the Creighton house. The neat white picket fence was still in fair repair, but the brown grass stood tall and uncut; the two stone lions were sadly chipped, and the barn that had once sheltered the Creighton sorrels was now patched, the roof of the lean-to shed sagging perceptibly in the center. As Baird viewed it, a fifteen-year-old lad with milking stool and pail approached the big red cow that stood in the barn lot, and this warned the man that supper would soon be served at the hotel.

He turned his steps that way, and as he strode along, he wondered who the boy could be. The Judge's wife had been a semi-invalid for years and had laid down her worldly cares the spring before Andy had left home. The Judge might have remarried and had a son. Then he thought of Mary Creighton. What had become of her? Mary, too, had been one of those he had taken home from school when he should have been doing chores. She had been of a more reserved type than Hilda Ransome. She had not bestowed her girlish kisses with the freedom of the other; in fact, she had not permitted such frivolity at all. Hilda had been more of the cuddling kind.

It was good to be back; it all seemed so drowsy and peaceful here—no meanness, no cares or worry, altogether different from the rather strenuous life out Mandan way. People sometimes grew cantankerous out there, and started in to alter the initials on other folks' cows, or fought over range- or water-rights.

OLD Dad Lenninger greeted him from behind the register of the hotel, his cheeks no more wrinkled and leathery than when Baird had seen him last, but his was the only familiar face, a half-dozen traveling men the only other patrons. He scanned the pages of the last Ridgeville Weekly *Gleaner* while he awaited the summons to the dining-room. There were many familiar names among those mentioned in its columns, others strange to him, but he enjoyed every word, even to the advertising

There was a discontented droop at the corners of her mouth. But it was very kissable—and he caught himself wondering.

matter. There was Conrad Jenkins' advertisement concerning real-estate and chattel loans, rates very low. He remembered Conrad as having been one of the old-young business men when he was a boy. People had predicted a bright future for Con—steady and saving, no bad habits; a careful, conservative young man. Baird chuckled softly.

"I wonder if he's still got that nickel he charged me for a penny fishhook when he knew I didn't dare go past the store for one," he mused. "And then told on me at school and caused them to collect me at the bridge-hole just when the fish were biting fine! They'd take any kind of bait that day."

He noted that a three-year-old red steer, with white face and spotted sides, had strayed off from the Wilson farm out on the Summit road—five dollars reward for its return. Alf Henderson had been hurt in a runaway. A black heifer had broken out of a pasture lot on the Crocker farm—five dollars reward. That was the other way out of town from the Wilson place, where the red steer had disappeared.

"Funny they don't specify brands," he thought. He recalled the half-column of turkey-track sketches descriptive of various brands on missing stock that appeared in nearly every issue of the small range-country weeklies. "Black heifer. That's a little too general to draw fire," he reflected.

Linn Watkins had been busily spreading the news of little Andy Baird's return and remarking about the sinfully luxurious fur coat. By the time Baird had finished the evening meal, the old-time group had gathered in the lobby of the hotel. Lafe Howard was town marshal now, the badge of authority conspicuous on his vest. Pete Stilwell, another old-timer, a little leaner and more stringy, if that were possible, than of yore, his Adam's apple a trifle more pronounced, was the next to come. Others arrived. They were cordial but not effusive, waiting to learn more of the prodigal's material advantages or shortcomings.

The talk drifted to personalities, the affairs of neighbors freely discussed in the presence of the traveling salesmen; and Baird—late from Wade's Crossing, where the citizens were much more reticent in such matters through fear of precipitating widespread trouble by loose speech—found himself uneasy. This subsided, and he realized that it was but a part of the quiet contentment he had remarked earlier in the day. No fear of trouble, peaceful—that was the keynote of Ridgeville atmosphere. He heard much of interest concerning old friends. Hilda Ransome was unmarried. Old Dan Ransome had prospered, and Hilda had become too exacting in her tastes to be satisfied with any of Ridgeville's young bachelors. She did seem, though, to favor William some. And there were those as predicted—

The news that she still remained unwed sent Baird's mind wandering back into the rosy paths of old, and he became preoccupied, catching little of the conversation till it veered to Mary Creighton. The Judge had remarried, he learned, and had a son. He had come upon adversity in his declining years, and both he and his wife had died, leaving the boy for Mary Creighton to bring up. He was a holy terror, a regular young pirate, Tommy Creighton was; no doubt of that. Mary taught in the Ridgeville school and had a hard time to make ends meet, it seemed. Baird sensed a sort of smug satisfaction in the headshakes and regretful phrases that were part of the recital of her troubles; but of course he only imagined that. Some one mentioned that she didn't hold her head so high as she once had. The air suddenly seemed close and stuffy—he had lived so much in the open. He rose and wandered out. He would walk the three miles to the place and greet William. Good old William, he'd be glad to see him again.

HE now remembered that the rest of Ridgeville had felt that the Creightons held themselves a shade above the average run of folks. Uppity! But Mary, the way he remembered her, hadn't been uppity with him. The old Judge had frequently invited him in when he carried her books home from school, but of course, his bashfulness and the awe of the big house and the big man had combined to prevent his acceptance. Mary had been friendly to him. He had counted her as a pal who stood up for him in his rebellious youth. Too bad she was down and out. Something would have to be done about that.

His revery was interrupted by a soft voice greeting him delightedly; and Hilda Ransome stood before him with extended hand. She looked still sweet and girlish in the soft dusk, and he was unaccountably glad. He reached forth his hand. Her own arm was extended high from the shoulder, hand drooping slightly; and as their palms met he experienced a disconcerting sense of being held at bay. But he remembered a Miss Somebody visiting Wade's Crossing who had used that same odd grip; of course, one either bowed to a lady without touching hands at all, or used this hold—never smacked palms and pump-handled, as between man and man. Hilda invited him in to tell her all about himself. William could wait.

The Ransome parlor was rich and homelike. That was it—homelike. Hilda drew him out about his business and spoke of her own trips to adjacent cities and the affairs she attended there. She seemed wistful, as if she had suffered some sorrow, and there was a discontented droop at the corners of her pretty mouth. But it was kissable—very kissable; and he caught himself wondering. Of course, she didn't allow that sort of thing any more; yet he had an inner conviction that he could. But he mustn't rush things too fast. She too spoke regretfully of Mary Creighton's hard struggle and mentioned that she had had no new clothes for "land knows how long." It was late when he left, and there was a warm pressure in her parting handclasp that sent a thrill through him. He wasn't ready for sleep, and decided to walk out and spend the night with William, after all.

THE road threaded the woods along the river, and after following it for two miles Baird noted a dim road branching off to the left. Bart Hopper, a big, hulking young fellow whom Baird's father had detested, lived down that road in the Little Bend of the river. Bart had trapped some, and fished—too lazy to work. He had only come in there and built his shack a few months before Andy left.

A mile farther on, a second road branched off, "the Baird road," leading to the old home in the Big Bend of the stream. Little Bend and Big Bend, how familiar it all seemed! He saw a light gleaming in the farmyard as he neared it. Two men were dressing out a beef by the light of a swinging lantern. Bart Hopper and William! Both were perceptibly startled when Andy's voice boomed close at hand.

"The prodigal has returned," he said, "—in time to sample a steak off the fatted calf. Some one must have warned you, William, that I'd turned up again. Shake, Will, and say you're glad to see the black sheep once more."

The two men blinked at him in the fitful lantern-light. Then William stretched forth his hand.

"I'm glad to see you, Andy," he said. "I always knew you'd come back some day. Yes, I can truthfully say that I'm glad. Just how glad remains to be seen. That will be determined by yourself."

Andy Baird laughed aloud and slapped his thigh.

"Same old William," he said. "Not changed a bit! Your heart's right, Will, but you'll never be able to thaw out and pronounce regular human words." He turned and shook Bart Hopper's hand, then sized up the beef with experienced eye. It was small, only a yearling, the carcass suspended and the hide removed and put away, and he saw that one man could easily complete the job of butchering it out. "You finish it up, Bart," he said. "Will and I'll go inside. We've lots to talk about." He spoke as one accustomed to giving orders and having them obeyed, seemingly almost unconscious of the fact that he was directing his brother's man and not his own. Hopper eyed him sullenly, but at a nod from William, he turned back to the work alone.

"Still working night and day, Will, I see," Andy remarked as they went inside. "A man has to do that sometimes, I've found. I've put in some fairly strenuous licks myself."

The younger brother talked at length, mainly of old friends; William contributed but little to the conversation, answering questions tersely, but scrupulously refraining from going into unnecessary details. At last, with customary bluntness, he launched into what was uppermost in his mind.

"Of course I know what you've come for, Andrew," he stated. "I always knew you'd come some day. I suppose it's right that you should. I had the place valued at the time Father was called. I've made a little off it each year, which earnings are mine by right, as you haven't helped with the work. The place has increased in value to a certain extent through the work I've done on it, and I don't see why you should share in that. I've had an opinion on it, and my view was upheld. The original valuation was eight thousand, Andy, and half of that is yours. I want to do what's right. But of course I'll tie it up so you can't squander the principal. I'll arrange it tomorrow, and you can quit-claim to me."

The younger Baird listened as if stunned, and when he answered there was hurt in his tones.

"Oh, be human for once in your life, Will!" he begged. "We're own brothers, and here I've just come back—to talk about folks, not affairs. What do I want with any of your change? You've grubbed for it, and it's yours. I've no designs on it. I've prospered a little myself, and the place is yours, for all of me. Get that, and let's talk sense. I'll quit-claim to you before I leave and pay the recording fees myself. Now, come on, Will, and act like regular folks. Thaw out."

Gradually, and a little suspiciously, William thawed.

AN hour later Andy looked from his bedroom window and saw a dancing blaze from up toward Bart Hopper's shack in the Little Bend. Bart must be sleeping out, to have such a merry fire as that. The following morning he wandered round the farm. Hopper seemed to be working there, but most of his time was spent in idling, and at this Andy marveled, knowing it was not his brother's habit to tolerate a second's waste of time while he paid the bills. William explained that he gave Bart odd jobs at times to help him out, not steady work. Before noon William hitched up a team to take the beef to town, and they rode in together. A big express package, consigned to Andrew Baird, was in evidence on the hotel counter as they entered, and Andy swiftly opened it.

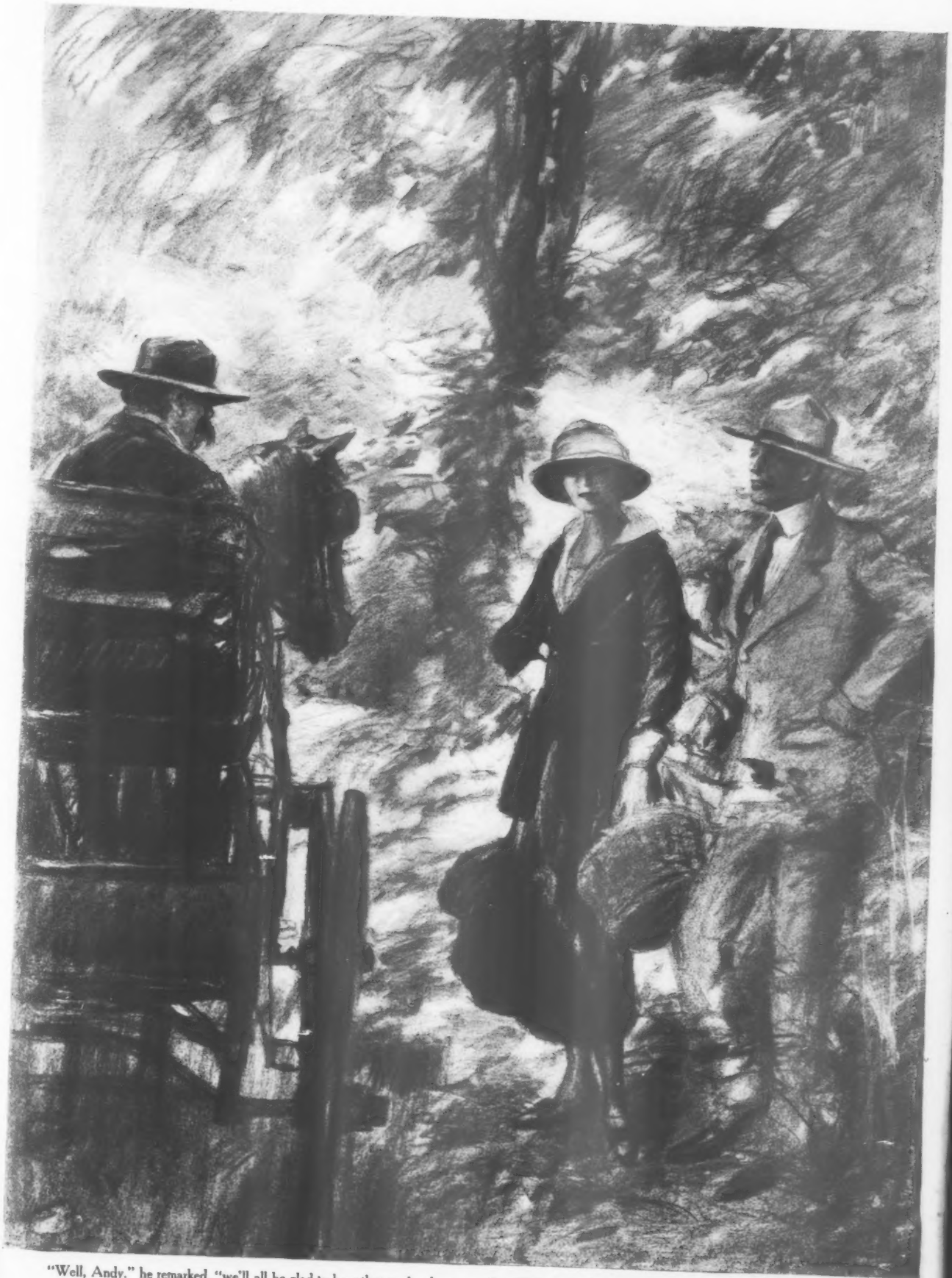
"Little present, Will, just to celebrate the runaway's return," he said, and extended a wonderful fur coat that gleamed and shimmered. "I remembered how tarnation cold it used to get winters when I was a kid back here—noways as cold as it gets out Mandan way, at that, I guess; but it seemed a more shivery sort of a cold, some way. Maybe you can use this when you drive."

No one but the hotel proprietor witnessed the gift of the coat, but every soul that saw William wearing it jumped at once to the conclusion that he had not purchased it himself but that Andy had been the donor. Rumors of his exceeding prosperity spread with amazing swiftness. William himself clinched the proof of this before he drove out of town.

"I hope, Andy, there's no hard feelings over what happened before you went away," he said. "I only did what I thought was right, and at the time it seemed for your own best good."

"Who's going to bother about things like that?" Andy asked. "Not me! I expect those wallopings helped toughen me up so I could look after myself out where I went."

Some one overheard and spread the glad tidings. Late in the afternoon Hilda Ransome waved a friendly greeting from across the street. Andy Baird thought once more how good it was to get back. As he waited for the evening meal, he scanned several old and dusty copies of the *Gleaner* and found them much the same, with familiar names cited in each one. In one copy two



"Well, Andy," he remarked, "we'll all be glad to hear that you've done as well as William, but there's a mighty true saying that a rolling stone—"

months old he noted that a red steer had broken out of the woodlot pasture on a farm seven miles west of town—five dollars reward. In a later issue a big white cow, barren, one black hind leg, was cited as having disappeared from home—five dollars reward. Something seemed to strike Baird as unnatural about those advertisements. He couldn't quite think what it was—but there was an off-note somewhere. It suddenly came to him just as Lafe Howard, the marshal, entered the hotel. It was simple, once he thought of it, he mused. Cows weren't prone to stray away from home. In fact, they'd almost invariably quit a strange range, if given half a chance, and head straight back for home.

"I guess they find all of these missing cows after a day or two, Lafe," he said. "Cows don't wander far from home."

Lafe chuckled fatly.

"You don't know much about cows, Andy," he replied. "You're not well up on cows."

"Well, maybe not," Baird confessed. "But there's several head wearing the A.B. mark."

"Some cows wont wander far, and of course they get found and returned," Lafe informed. "There's others that seem to be a pretty wandering lot, and once that kind gets started, they just keep on moving, seems like, and never turn up any more. Shows on the face of it that they pull right out, because we never get no reports. That's how it works out." There was no disputing such logic, and Baird answered the call to supper without going deeper into it.

HE spent the evening as he had the last, with Hilda Ransome. He felt, when greeting her, that she had lowered her guard a little, for the handclasp was minus the swan's-neck droop that had characterized it the night before. Once more he had the feeling that there was just a chance that she mightn't object if he tried for the pretty lips, and there was an odd excitement in the thought. The discontented droop disappeared when she smiled and pouted. They spoke again of Mary Creighton, and he wondered how it had come about that his attentions had been so completely transferred to Hilda during that last year of his stay at home. Mary didn't seem to enter into his recollections of that particular time at all; yet always up until that last year she had been his one best friend among the girls. Surely they hadn't quarreled. Then he remembered that that was the year she had gone away to school. But he forgot Mary Creighton while lingering over Hilda's hand in parting.

The next two days he spent in wandering on foot along the roads outside of town, in greeting old friends, and in listening to the town-talk related by Pete Stilwell, Lafe Howard and their cronies in the lobby of the hotel. Some vague undercurrent of doubt seemed to be in the background of his mind. It was too elusive to be defined in words, even in thought, but it persisted, and he seemed unable to shake it off. He could not place his uneasiness, had no subject on which to fasten it; yet it was always with him. Only in the evenings did it leave him, for the evenings were too full of Hilda Ransome to permit of sharing his thoughts of her with other things.

The fourth night he walked some distance along the river road, thinking seriously, after a rather late leave-taking at the Ransome house. As he turned back toward town, he noticed a dull gleam through the trees toward Little Bend. Bart Hopper was evidently having another fire. Again the little nebulous imps of uncertainty seemed struggling to break from his subconscious mind.

In the morning he took a stroll east of town, and as he walked, he was observing all livestock along his route without even realizing it—the habit was deep. A black heifer grazed along a rail fence, and he suddenly woke to the fact that he was standing still and studying her.

"Five dollars reward," he murmured absently, then laughed aloud, the solution of that baffling puzzle clear at last. It was the cow-man's everlasting urge to ride for missing stock, to look for strange brands on his own home range. He had been at it too long, had been too thoroughly trained to note the brand and earmarks of every hoof in each day's ride, to pass lightly over a notice of strayed or stolen stock.

"I wanted to throw my leg across a horse and look for those lost cows," he laughed. "That's what was ailing me—as simple as that, but I couldn't name it until right now." It troubled him no longer now that he knew what it was, and he moved briskly back to town. Lafe Howard, Pete Stilwell and the others were gathered in the Maple Leaf Hotel, and he listened absently. Some of their remarks seemed to smack of malice. But of course he only imagined that. It was part of everyone's friendly interest in everyone else—part of the very atmosphere of the quiet little town where there was no strife and enmity. He decided to go out and see Will.

As he walked his mind was busy. Little insinuating remarks to the effect that he was trying to beat William's time with Hilda Ransome had been dropped in his hearing. They were just trying to jolly him; that was all. He had heard that Mary Creighton was anxious to sell the place if she could get a fair price—also that William occasionally dropped in to spend an evening with Mary. The Old Guard seemed thoroughly posted on all affairs—even knew that William had always wanted to live in the Creighton house. They had intimated that he found it difficult to decide between gratifying that ambition and the lure of Hilda Ransome's probable inheritance. But of course that was all said in fun, the small-town idea of sly humor. Once more he assured himself that it was good to be back.

He sized up William's bunch of stock that grazed in the point of the bend.

"You ought to grade 'em up, Will," he counseled. "You've got every shade from brindle to strawberry roan, which are both—and all shades between—mighty poor tints for cows. Weed out the scrub shades and hold to one color, Will." But William remained unmoved.

It was late afternoon when

(Continued on page 163)

"I wont use it," he said, "but I thought it would help you stand hitched, to know that I had it along."

Through the storm Sally "took after" old Pres' Gibbs, feeling that he would head for the river.

There Still Are Fairies

By William Dudley Pelley

A favorite Red Book Magazine author here contributes an appealing idyl of small-town New England life—and introduces to you some real folks who are well worth knowing.

Illustrated by H. J. Soulen

HER real name was Evelyn Brown, but it might as well have been Mary Jones, for all that people remembered or cared, save her near relatives, perhaps. She was Happy Sally to all and sundry. But don't carry off the idea that she was one of those little motion-picture sunshines with a riot of golden hair, who love all dumb beasts and play with kittens and visit the sick in the first five hundred feet of film and in the last reel fade away into the arms of a cow-eyed lover whose patent-leather hair makes every real man in the audience want to hit him.

In the first place, Happy Sally wasn't "little," and she didn't have golden hair, and about the only dumb beast for which she had any use was the old white horse that she rode behind into town every morning from her mother's place out by Haystack Mountain. She visited the sick only when she needed items for our local paper, and when it came to fading away in a lover's arms—well, she just didn't; that's all. Uncle Joseph Fodder, the town philosopher, was wont now and then to declare that he knew positively why Will Whipple had bowed legs; he'd indiscreetly held Happy Sally on his lap for a whole evening once—the time of the surprise party up at June Blake's.

The fact is, Happy Sally was a maiden lady—there weren't any bachelor girls then—who would never see thirty-five again, with eyes and hair as black as the wing of a raven and a figure that reminded Uncle Joe "of the *Great Eastern* in a fog." At times in the spring she walked with a slight limp, a chronic muscular affliction resulting from a near-fatal accident the summer she was seventeen. Crossing Stevens' pasture out by the Mountain one day, a bull had seen her and gored her in the left leg just as she reached the fence. If she had been five seconds late at that fence we would never have known a Happy Sally in our office. And that would have been little short of a catastrophe. For Happy Sally is, after all, an allegory. The world generally is starving for more like her. Some old maids are born; some achieve old-maidenhood; some

have it thrust upon them. It would be difficult to class Sally. The way her romance has turned out upsets all the principles of sentimental philosophy.

MYRTLE COREY married the Briggs boy, and things began to go to rack and ruin in our office. Old Preston Gibbs was too antiquated and slow to handle all the thousand little details connected with the business of publishing a small-town daily newspaper. He had worked for us a long time and was pathetically faithful. He was supposed to be the bookkeeper—at least, he made entries in the books in a fine Spencerian hand—and looked after the subscription list. But when it came to answering the phone, writing "personals," checking the advertising, watching the expirations of the "classifieds," making out monthly bills, opening the mail and keeping Sam Hod's editorial desk clear of fool Government pamphlets, he roiled folks with his short temper and went to pieces generally.

Old Pres' knew he was "falling down on the job," and the knowledge made him more nervous and slipshod than ever. Besides, he needed the sixteen dollars which he drew every Saturday afternoon, because his wife was in poor health and he had a butterfly daughter, Ruth, born late in his married life, who was graduating from high school and unreasonable at times in her demands on her father's thin purse. His attempts to maintain the pace were pathetic. He was a bookkeeper of the old school, and his years sat heavily upon him. The sun of his commercial worth had set, and he knew it.

So we tried to get a girl to help about the office generally. Meantime our business suffered.

Subscribers' names began to go askew on the mailing list. People handed in important items that were never printed; they were found weeks afterward beneath piles of unanswered correspondence. We overdrew our checking-account in the People's Bank because of the mistakes in the old man's figures, and the cashier came over and said some mighty embarrassing things within earshot of our employees. Our country correspondents sent in weekly letters which were improperly edited, and other papers around the State began to reprint the "breaks" in their humorous columns. It was awful. One person in the business office of a country daily can make or break a newspaper.

Happy Sally had often tried to get a job with us during Myrtle's tenure of office, but we had had no place for her. When her mother died, leaving her a little property and money, she went to live with an aunt out by the Mountain. We did not think of her at once. George Kenyon, our make-up man, couldn't get his ad-proofs corrected promptly in the front office, and as that delayed the make-up, he finally came in and talked curtly to old Pres'.

The old man broke down and shed tears, for which George was immediately ashamed and sorry. George said that since Myrtle had gone, the front office was a gob of gloom anyhow, and ought to have somebody like Happy Sally Brown in it to cheer things up. That gave us the idea. We reached her by phone and explained what we wanted. It was about two o'clock of a Friday afternoon when she responded in person. And anyone who knows the newspaper business recognizes that two o'clock of a Friday afternoon is the busiest hour of the week in a country daily newspaper office.

"WELL," she declared cheerfully, as she limped in, "I'm here! Can I get a job at last?"

"You can if you fill the bill," Sam Hod answered. "When could you start?"

"Now," said Sally.

"How much will you work for?"

"Fifteen dollars," she responded promptly. We had paid Myrtle eighteen.

"You're hired," declared Sam. "Anything is better than this!" And he made a despairing gesture that included the heaps of proofs, correspondence and general clutter spread over the office furniture and floor.

Old man Gibbs looked up at the girl plaintively. Sam's declaration was a direct slam of his inefficiency. But Happy Sally only gave him a wink.

The telephone bell rang. The editor reached for it.

"I'll answer it!" said Sally. And she did.

There never has been another like Happy Sally; there never will be. She tossed her coat and hat at a hook and by some characteristic miracle they struck it and clung. She took the phone-receiver in one hand, scraped around among the papers with the other and found a pencil, kicked her rubbers off under Myrtle's flat-topped desk at the same time, called a cheery "Hello!" into the transmitter and bit off a chunk of the pencil in her fine hard teeth to get at the lead so she could write.

That was Happy Sally—doing four or five things at once and without a flutter.

She got the item from the phone, meanwhile spreading the papers about the desk into orderly piles while the long-winded person at the other end was talking, and yet never missing a syllable.

"You don't mean *Henry* Wright; you mean *George* Wright," she corrected. "Hen' Wright's dead!" And she was right. You see, she had lived in the place all her life, and knew every man, woman, child and dog by their first names, and who their forbears were, and how they were connected, and where every man worked, and how much money he drew, and how he got along with his wife and his wife's relations.

She was more the wonder because she did it all without conscious effort. No one ever saw Happy Sally in a hurry.

IT had been two o'clock of a Friday afternoon when she came in, with proofs to read and a paper to go to press. Everybody was fussed up with the heavy week-end load of Friday advertising. Nobody knew exactly how it happened, but by three o'clock every proof had been read and was out on George's stone. She had answered the phone twenty-one times and gathered every loose paper in the office into one big pile which by four o'clock was all sorted. Letters, many a week old, were put aside to be answered as required. Worthless stuff was jammed into a wastebasket—she had an instinct for finding that wastebasket behind her without glancing around. And she hit it every time. Uncle Joe declared she became a better shot at that wastebasket than Wilbur Nieson was at a spittoon.

At five o'clock Sam came in from the back room with some moist copies of the paper; the duplex was grinding away merrily.

"What's happened to my desk?" he demanded.

"I cleaned it off," said Sally. "I thought it needed it."

Sam's eyes shot angrily to her own desk. He was about to remind her that there were documents there needing more attention than those on his own, when he noted with a jolt that for the first time in months he was beholding on Myrtle's desk nothing but a spotless new blotter, an inkwell, a telephone and a tray of clips.

"Good Lord! Where's the stuff gone?" he demanded.

"I filed it," replied Sally.

"But the letters!"

"I answered most of them. The rest are in that little wicker basket awaiting your attention."

Sam sat down weakly. The thing was epochal.

"You ought to get a woman in here to clean this place," suggested Sally. "Nobody can keep their work up in a grubby office."

"I don't know where to find a good scrub-woman."

"I'll find one for you," she volunteered.

She did. By eight o'clock next morning Fred Hastings' widow was in there making the suds fly.

"Where'd you find her?" Sam wanted to know.

"Oh, I just dropped in and spoke to her on my way home last night," Sally responded.

That was like Sally too, that "dropping in."

She "dropped in" at the Main Street stores and got ads; she "dropped in" with proofs for fussy advertisers to O. K.; she "dropped in" at lawyers' offices and straightened out tangles, and into doctors' houses and ministers' studies and got items.

Sam would come down to the office in the morning and say:

"Funny, there wasn't a single piece of mail in the post office box this morning."

"No," said Sally. "I dropped in and got the mail on my way over."

"Where is it?"

"Oh, Jim Gilman needed copy for the linotype, and I sorted out the country correspondence and gave it to him. Mr. Gibbs wasn't very busy with the books, so I just opened the rest and gave him the checks and bills to work on."

"But where's the exchanges?"

"Most of them I've already clipped; the other machine went short of copy too, so I ran through the papers and got out the State items of importance. What's left of the copies you'll find on top the safe—and please pile them back in the same order or else throw them in the wastebasket."

"Any proofs for me to read? Jim ought to have set a pretty good string last evening; the machine was running fine when I went home."

Old Pres' Gibbs uttered a cry of fright and weak protest. Then he became as one possessed.

"I didn't have anything else to do, so I read them," Sally informed him carelessly.

"You didn't have anything else to do!" stammered Sam. "My Gawd!"

He entered his little private office, calling back:

"Miller, of the Metropolitan Drug Store, is coming over this morning to see me about a page ad' for his One-cent Sale. When he comes, let me know."

"Mr. Miller's been over; I fixed him up," Sally informed him. "Daddy Joe was short of copy on the ad-hook; so I sent the drug ad' out to him; he's been working on it for half an hour."

Sam became suddenly pale and dazed.

"What do I do around here, anyhow?" he asked weakly.

But Sally didn't hear that. She was busy with the Baptist minister's wife, fixing up a little ad' for their Friday food-sale, signing for the first pony report of the Associated Press and showing an expressman where to deposit the latest shipment of boiler-plate.

IT was a Tuesday morning in early April. Sally had been working for us about ten months. She had "dropped in" at the Bon Ton Millinery to interview little Miss Morgan about an ad' for her new spring line of Easter hats. Her limp was more pronounced than usual; she was dressed in a plain old ulster coat and cheap knockabout hat. There was a pencil stuck in her hair. She looked a bit shabby, but she was smiling—she was always smiling.

Julie Hathaway, Miss Morgan's only clerk, was selling a hat to Ruth Gibbs, the daughter of old Preston. It was one of the most expensive hats in the store. Sally saw the price tag; it was nineteen dollars. That is pretty high money for women's headgear in our little Vermont town of Paris.

"I'll take it," said Ruth, "and you may charge it to Father."

For the moment Sally's smile faded. After Miss Hathaway had noted the alterations to be made in the trimming and retired to the rear workroom, Sally left Miss Morgan and moved up front, where Ruth was idly viewing herself in various other "creations." Sally pretended to admire the hat which the other girl had purchased.

"But it comes awful high, Ruth," she remonstrated. "Do you think you can really afford it?"

"Well, of all the nerve!" exclaimed Ruth. "What business is it of yours how much I pay for a hat?"

"I sort of rub elbows with your pa in the course of the day's work, you know," Sally explained, quietly. "Sometimes he tells me his troubles. Most of them seem to be financial. With your ma sick, and all, it's quite a load for him to carry."

"He should have spine enough to get a better job," was the tart reply. "It serves him right for working in that newspaper hole for all he gets, at his age in life."

"But he isn't as young as he was once, Ruth. Besides, your schooling is costing him a heap. You ought to be as economical as you can."

"Economical fiddlesticks!" the girl exclaimed. "I'm only young once, and I've got a right to happiness. If Father can't support me, I intend to find somebody who can. When I get as old as you are, Sally Brown, I don't intend to be pointed out as the raveled end of a has-been romance—"

For a moment Happy Sally stood there with a face white as a sheet of paper.

"Well," she said in a strained voice when she had recovered her self-control, "have it your own way. I suppose it serves me right for poking my nose into other people's affairs. But you ought not to do it, Ruth. Some day you may be sorry."

"I'll take my chances," the other assured her pertly with a toss of her head.

SALLY came away from the millinery store, for once, without the thing she had gone in to get. She walked the streets of the town for over an hour. When she finally came back to the office, she glanced across at old Preston Gibbs.

She studied him. Once he had been a good-looking man: traces of it still remained in his features. She knew what others of us did not until later: that there had been a sad romance between this old bookkeeper and her own mother in a former happier time. But for some foolish thing the two had quarreled, and in a fit of pique Sally's mother had married Asa Brown.

In a sort of listless, lonely, broken-hearted way, Preston Gibbs had married one of the Harding girls and lived to rue it many times. For Ruth was like her mother, and not for a moment did the two women cease to remind old Preston of the failure he was at sixty. Perhaps when Ruth married, things might be easier for him, Sally reflected. But it certainly was a mystery how he managed to feed and clothe—especially clothe—his womenfolk on the wages he received at the Daily *Telegraph* office.

Somehow in that moment Sally wanted to go over and put a sympathetic, maternal arm about his bowed shoulders.

But on Happy Sally's part such a move would have been more or less ridiculous.

ON the following morning Sally came in off the street and sat down behind her flat-topped desk by the east window. Her smile was gone again. She made aimless marks on her blotter. Sam was sorting some dusty documents in the green box safe; the clean-up habit had become contagious. Old Pres' Gibbs had shuffled off to the post office for stamps.

"Ruth Gibbs has been down to the Ready-to-Wear Shop and bought a dress costing thirty-seven dollars for the Elks dance," she announced.

"Well," demanded Sam, "what of it?"

"She had it charged to her father."

Sam stopped to light his pipe. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"It's up to Gibbs to take care of his own daughter," he commented.

"His money troubles are getting on his nerves. He's snarling up the bookkeeping badly," Sally told him. "I wanted some statements of accounts yesterday to collect some bills for the pay-roll. He was all the morning making them out, and there were so many mistakes in 'em I had to take his ledger during the noon-hour and scratch off what I wanted for myself. If this office doesn't want to lose money, it should have a more modern bookkeeping system."

"I can't fire the old chap," said Sam hopelessly. "He's been with us too long—"

"You needn't fire him, Mr. Hod. But he ought to have a little tactful assistance," Sally suggested.

"I can't afford—"

"You don't need to afford *anything*. If you'll just talk to him so he wont think I'm trying to work him out of a job, I'll help him."

"You! For heaven's sake, haven't you enough to do around here now?"

Sally's smile came back, at that. "There isn't enough work around here to keep more than one person busy more than half the time, anyhow," she declared, and threw down her pencil. "If anybody's told you different, they've been stringing you."

That put it right up to Sam. To take over Pres' Gibbs' bookkeeping was a mere trifle—or so she made it.

THE announcement of this to the old man made him pathetically sick for a time. His weak eyes grew paler and more desperate. The night Ruth went to the Elks ball in that new dress, Sally found him in the office alone, bowed over his desk, in his blue-veined hands a little faded photograph.

An old and faded photograph! God only knows where he had found it. At the back of some drawer or file, probably. Maybe Sam had run across it while cleaning the safe and flung it to one side.

It was a picture of the old Paris baseball nine of a generation ago—a famous nine—all the elderly people of the town will remember it. Fred Upton, dead these many years, was the captain. Sam Appleton, who now fills an important berth in a shoe company down in Massachusetts, was pitcher; and Jim Dowd was catcher—the engineer running the Flyer the night it was ditched beyond Rutland and a hundred people were burned to death, you remember. There were other dead-and-gone faces there too—especially women. For this red-tinted old photograph had been taken one Fourth of July over in Foxboro when the boys had their girls along and the whole crowd had posed for the picture.

It was speaking to the old man now as a voice of dead days. It called him back to a time when life was all ahead and filled with rosy dreams, before experience had taken its pound of flesh or realization had come to him that, after all, the only positive thing in the universe is Change.

Lifting his aching eyes, the old man saw Sally and held out the photograph. And she saw, among those faces come to life again—*her own mother's.*

The girl with the braided hair and bangs, the puffed sleeves, the flounced skirt and panniers, who had afterward married Asa Brown and died of a broken heart—she had been Pres' Gibbs' "girl" on that far-off Independence Day when this old bald-headed man had been lithe and nimble enough to play "center outfield" and they had "walloped the Foxboro Academy Catamounts to a jelly—twenty-seven to thirteen!"

Presently Sally realized that old Pres' Gibbs was talking.

"I remember the day it was taken—seems only yesterday. Joe Fodder umpired, and one of the Foxboro boys got mad and hit him. And Joseph took off his coat and thrashed him. Sam Appleton was nursing a black eye when we all lined up for Frank Williams' camera."

HE paused, and only the philosophical ticking of the battered clock over the door broke the little silence.

"I was happy in those days," he ran on, "God knows how happy, though *I* never did at the time. I remember I was going to finish at the Seminary and go to law-school and be a great attorney. Years ago that was—years and years ago!"

"You *did* go to law-school, didn't you?" Sally asked.

"A year. I used to think lots of your ma, Evelyn. You know that. She's there beside me in the picture—I'm the one with the whiskers, though I was only twenty-two at the time. When we had a difference, I sort of lost heart. I came home one vacation and didn't go back. I married Gracia Harding, and her dad gave me a job in the sawmill. After that, with a wife to support, I had to give up my studies. I was always going back 'next year.' Then pretty soon I was too old. Tom came and we buried him. Then Lillian—then Ruthie. Lillian was killed in the Flyer wreck—you remember? She'd been up to Burlington to visit her grandma. Gracia took on terrible; maybe she aint entirely to blame for her shortness of temper. That left us with only Ruthie. And I've tried to do right by Ruthie—I've tried and tried, but somehow I never could seem to get ahead. How the years have gone! I'm old—*old!* I've missed my aim and my target, both, I guess. Oh, to go back! To go back to the years when this picture was taken—*just for one night!*"

He broke down then, and wept—wept out the sorrow of a lifetime.

Sally tried to comfort him, but he would not be comforted.

"Only yesterday—only yesterday!" He kept saying it over and over. "I wanted to do so much. I wanted to make such a success of everything. But I've cheated myself—and here at sixty I'm only a bookkeeper in a newspaper office for sixteen dollars a week."

"It's a good place. You'll have it as long as you're able to work anywhere," Sally reassured him.

"Oh, if it had only been your ma, Evelyn!" he pleaded. "I can smell the wet lilacs yet, out behind her house in the little sort of arbor where I used to meet her. I can hear the piano again in the evening and almost see the blue mist of the spring sunsets as your ma and I walked out into the country and picked wild cherry blossoms."

"I know now," Sally told him then, "why she kept that little sprig of dried cherry blossoms in our family Bible."

Old Pres' Gibbs gave an inarticulate cry, got up, put on his hat, hid the faded photograph away in his pocket and passed out into the night. You see *that* was more than he could stand.

Happy Sally sank upon the chair that he had vacated. In the evening quiet of the office she cupped her chin in her palms and let her fancies wander.

When forty years had passed, she wondered, would some life-weary soul weep for departed days and memories because of *her?*

There is an old fairy-tale, you recollect it?—of a hag who hobbled about the earth on a crooked cane, mumbling her toothless gums, and bent beneath the load of fagots on her back. Children booed and stoned her; older people shunned her. No one ever dreamed that the heart of the old hag was as the heart of a girl, and that her bent body housed a beautiful spirit. And then one day came a fair youth who protected the old hag from the missiles thrown by the boys, spoke kindly to her and rebuked those who made her lot in life hard.

When he had done these things, lo, the fagots fell from off her back; she straightened; her face and figure changed; her rags dissolved into garments of softness, and by the magic touch of an invisible fairy's wand she stood before the young man the most beautiful princess in all the world. By an evil spell she had been compelled to wear the monstrous outer shell of ugliness until Prince Charming should come along and release her.

Our Sally had read that fairy-tale when a little girl and cried many tears over it. Was there a Prince Charming anywhere in the world who might come and speak kindly to her, forget her physical deficiencies, protect her from the town's thoughtless comment, and let her disclose herself to him as the girl she still remained in her heart? Were there fairies any longer?

Resolutely, however, she finally put the bitter-sweet remorse and day-dreams from her mind. Back she went to the tiresome snarl of old Preston Gibbs' books. And at midnight it was a badly disturbed Sally who sat with ink-daubed fingers staring into unseeing distance.

Old Pres' Gibbs was short in his accounts about forty-five hundred dollars!

IT was characteristic of Sally that after proving her figures beyond any possible doubt, she should keep the sickening truth to herself for a time and meditate on the best course to pursue, whether to take it up first with old Pres' or recognize her prior responsibility to her employer. It was characteristic of her, too, that in the end she should decide to see old man Gibbs first.

It was four o'clock of a week-day afternoon, and the paper for the day was out. Old Pres' had failed to appear at his desk; his wife phoned down toward noon that he wasn't feeling well and would stay at home until he felt better. Sally was at her desk thinking about his nonappearance when the message came. Suppose Pres' suspected what she had stumbled upon—suppose he was making plans to run away? She decided she could not wait any longer. She would go up to his house right now.

Ruth Gibbs answered the bell. Her little nose went higher when she recognized who it was that had rung.

"I'd like to see your father," announced Happy Sally pleasantly but insistently.

"You can't! Pa's sick. And you've made him—you with your nosing around."

"This is very important, Ruth," Sally went on, restraining her impatience with difficulty. "Just how sick is your father? Has he had a doctor?"

"No—not that it's any of your business," was the sharp reply.

"It *is* my business," Sally declared. "And please be careful how you talk to me," she added.

Ruth flushed. She surveyed Sally's frumpiness from head to foot and then laughed sneeringly.

"Nobody's afraid of *you* around *here*, Miss Brown," she snapped. "And don't run away with the idea that they can be. You've done enough damage to us already—you and your efficiency! As if you didn't have enough to do there in the office, but had to go after Father's job, too—and making him a nervous wreck for fear he was going to lose it."

"Your father isn't a nervous wreck from fear of losing his job," Sally told her. "He's a nervous wreck for fear of being found out. And he's *been* found out, and I'm here to talk with him about it. I shouldn't wonder, when the truth is known, but what *you* were sent to jail."

Ruth stood rigid for a moment, her Cupid mouth a small round O.

"Jail!" she gasped. "What do you mean? What have *I* done?"

"They'll probably get *you* as a receiver of stolen goods."

Sally was not sure of her legal facts, but somehow it did not seem unreasonable to suppose that a daughter whose whims drove a father to embezzlement might fall into the class of "fences" and confederates.

"Has—my—father—"

"Yes, he has! He's been systematically taking money from Mr. Hod which came through the mail for subscriptions. He changed the dates on the mailing lists all right, but he never entered the currency in the ledger. He's been putting it into his pocket to buy things for *you!*"

For an instant Ruth was a very sick young lady. Then she recovered.

"You lie!" she shot out. "And if you don't lie, it serves Mr. Hod right for not paying Father more than sixteen dollars a week!"

"Take me to your father," ordered Sally. "We'll see if I lie."

A HOT breeze had been blowing all that afternoon. About four o'clock it had died away to a heavy stillness. As Sally had started for the Gibbs house, she had been conscious of low rumbles of thunder. Shadow and gloom seemed to be piling up on the world despite the sun, which was shining.

Now in the northwest a mass of cloud was rolling up, dead black, save where the fringed and curled edges showed a vivid, luminous white. There was something about it indescribably menacing as it loomed up there in the otherwise clear sky. Now and then a bolt of lightning darted through it, followed by an ominous growl.

As Sally entered the Gibbs house at last, the trees began to sway fitfully. The leaves turned over; the branches thrashed, and the dust in the street was caught up

"Surrounded by a world of loveliness and romance"

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Just before you go to bed, wash in your usual way with warm water and Woodbury's Facial Soap, finishing with a dash of cold water. Then dip the tips of your fingers in warm water and rub them on the cake of Woodbury's until they are covered with a heavy cream-like lather. Cover each blemish with a thick coat of this and leave it on for ten minutes. Then rinse very carefully, first with clear hot water, then with cold.

Use this treatment for a skin that is too oily

First cleanse your skin by washing in your usual way with Woodbury's Facial Soap and luke-warm water. Wipe off the surplus moisture, but leave the skin slightly damp. Now with warm water work up a heavy lather of Woodbury's Facial Soap in your hands. Apply it to your face and rub it into the pores thoroughly—always with an upward and outward motion. Rinse with warm water, then with cold. If possible rub your face for thirty seconds with a piece of ice.

For 25 cents—
these special Woodbury skin preparations

For 25 cents we will send you a miniature set of the Woodbury skin preparations containing samples of Woodbury's Facial Soap, Facial Cream, Facial Powder, and Cold Cream, *with the treatment booklet, "A Skin You Love to Touch."*

Send for this set today. Address The Andrew Jergens Company, 1702 Spring Grove Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio. *If you live in Canada, address The Andrew Jergens Co., Limited, 1702 Sherbrooke St., Perth, Ontario. English agents: H. C. Quelch & Co., 4 Ludgate Square, London, E. C. 4.*

WOODBURY'S FACIAL SOAP

in tiny spirals. Suddenly the daylight seemed to vanish as if blown out by some mighty breath. The great cloud rolled over the sun, and the gloom of twilight enveloped the world. At the same time a crash of thunder and a blinding glare of lightning accompanied the fast, big drops of rain. It was a strange setting in which to accuse an old man of crime.

Old Pres' was sitting near a window in his shirt-sleeves, his thin hands slowly swaying a palm-leaf fan. He had been that way all day—thinking, thinking, thinking.

"Pa," declared his daughter hotly and none too respectfully, "here's this Brown girl with a lot of slander about you stealing money from the *Telegraph* office. Tell her she's a contemptible liar!"

Old Pres' gave a start at her entrance, and the words which accompanied it. He uttered a hoarse cry and dropped the fan.

"Sit down, Mr. Gibbs," said Sally in her soft voice. "And send Ruth out; I want to talk to you alone."

But there was no sitting down for exposed, disgraced, terrified old Preston Gibbs. Maybe the storm breaking outside so weirdly, the strain he had been under since Sally volunteered to go over his books, the heat of the day which was ending, all conspired to bring about his condition. Old Pres' Gibbs uttered a cry of fright and weak protest. Then he became as one possessed.

In his shirt-sleeves, bareheaded, and in his carpet-slippers, he sprang for the opposite door as though Sally were an officer come to take him. Down the back stairs he plunged and started blindly out into the rain.

"I hope you see what you've done!" snarled his daughter. "He's—gone—crazy!"

RUTH'S declaration had the appearance of truth.

With sinking heart, torn by contradictory emotions, Sally stood swaying there in the middle of the stuffy upper chamber, staring dully at the doorway through which Pres' had fled.

Suddenly came an awful presentiment.

Suppose old Pres', worried to distraction and collapse by his felony and resultant disgrace, should head for the Green River and drown himself—or take his life in some other way simply because she *had* "nosed" into his books and unearthed the source of income which kept his daughter in her finery. Would the blame for his passing not be upon Sally's head?

"I'll go after him and bring him back!" she faltered. "I didn't come to arrest him. I only wanted to help!"

She stumbled down the way the old man had taken and set off after him through the blinding rain.

In an instant, almost, the thin muslin dress she wore sopped about her, and her skirts clung about her ankles in soggy strings. Her hair was beaten down, and the pins slid out, loosing it about her face and shoulders. Rivulets ran into her shoes, which "squeedged" at every step.

The thunder barked and rattled and growled and crashed with growing force in a world that was half night. In the business section signboards were coming down; cornices were being loosened; autotops were being ripped off; and branches of trees were breaking. Vivid whips of lightning lashed the valley. The rain was so dense that from one side of Main Street it blotted out sight of the other.

Through this now historic storm Happy Sally Brown "took after" old Pres' Gibbs, scarcely knowing where she was going but feeling instinctively that he would head for the river.

THEN, almost as suddenly as it had begun, the storm ceased. The rain stopped, the thunder rolled away to the eastward; the sun burst out over a radiant, dripping world—a strange, wild, wonderfully fragrant world from which the day's killing heat had been washed. People ventured from doorways and dwellings to appraise the extent of the damage.

Happy Sally came back from the river after a time, satisfied old Pres' had not gone there. Passing Riverview Cemetery, whose entrance is located on the slight rise of ground at the far east end of Main Street, she chanced to look in.

And in there among the graves she caught sight of the man she was after. He had sought shelter under the huge maple near the Preston mausoleum and been frightened out of his frenzy by the violence of the storm.

The world was bathed in molten gold as Sally confronted him. The old man moved over to the steps of the mausoleum and sat down. Sally shook out her skirts, twisted up her hair and sat down beside him.

"I know all about it, Mr. Gibbs," she said quietly. "But why did you do it? Was it—was it—Ruth?"

"Ruthie—and her mother—yes," he answered. "Things were so hard at home, and money was so scarce—"

And he went back and told her what his life had been, for years.

Happy Sally listened, only interrupting with an occasional word of sympathy.

The sun set in a diamond-clear west, throwing shafts of amber light across a world repainted with the deep calm greens of New England midsummer. Robins called to one another. The puddles narrowed. The earth was very beautiful. And when the old man's story was finished, Sally sat for a long time silent. Wild roses perfumed the air about her, as saffron and old lavender had scented the story to which she had listened.

Finally—

"Mr. Gibbs," she said, "that money's got to be put back. It's Mr. Hod's. He's having a hard enough time to run his newspaper. Yes—it's got to be made up to him."

"I can't give it back; I've spent it, spent it for Ruthie and her mother just to get some peace at home," the old man answered.

Happy Sally Brown swallowed hard.

"I've got some money, Mr. Gibbs," she declared in a husky whisper. "It's what Mother left me. I'll loan it to you. And if you can't ever pay it back—well—it wont matter much."

Old Pres' turned away.

"I can't take it," he muttered.

"I'll make you take it. It's the price of my silence," Happy Sally Brown declared. "I didn't mean to go working you out of a job. I didn't nose into your books expecting to discover a shortage. It just—happened. But I haven't told anybody yet—and I wont, providing you take the money Mother left and make it up to Mr. Hod."

"But Hod'll know. How can he help it?" Pres' pleaded.

"Put it back a few dollars a day at a time — just as you took it," Sally answered. "It may take quite a spell. But it's the only way you can, without discovery."

"I can't! I can't!" old Preston cried.

"Think of Ruth—and your wife," she reminded him. "What chance will Ruth have to marry the man she hopes to marry, if it all becomes public property?"

He was stricken to silence by that.

After a while Happy Sally sighed.

"That money was going to keep me when I got to be a *real* old maid—so old I might not be able to work any longer," she said as if to herself. "But I suppose it's selfish to look at things that way. I'm still able to support myself—"

"When you marry—"

"I wont ever marry, Mr. Gibbs. I guess I'm not the marrying kind—although—I aint saying—but what—I'd like to have a home—"

"I wont take your money!" he declared with what vehemence was left him.

"After all, Mr. Gibbs, it isn't my money; it's Mother's, the girl you just told me about," Sally went on. "She loved you when you were both young, loved you more than you ever dreamed. I think if she knew you were in this trouble now, she'd want you to have the use of it. After all, she's to blame, in a way. If she hadn't married my dad as she did, you and she would have belonged to each other and been happy, and this—this wouldn't have happened. Yes, Mr. Gibbs, I think Mother would want you should have it. Wherever she is, if she knows, it will make everything all right."

And so Sally at last made old Pres' agree to accept her money.

IT has been a year almost to a day since the afternoon of "the big thunderstorm."

About two months ago Sam Hod leaned back in his swivel chair one Saturday afternoon and frowned.

"Where in seven kinds of Sam Scratch is all this money coming from?" he demanded. "I'm getting a bigger surplus every week, more money'n I ever made in the newspaper business in my life. There's a reason for it. There must be!"

Old Pres' Gibbs looked up from his books, and his sallow face went white. But Happy Sally only laughed.

"It's a good year in the newspaper business everywhere," she declared. "All the publishers say so."

"Well," answered Sam, "it's evidently so darned good that I feel able to afford a certified public accountant to audit our books and see that we're all ship-shape. Something's happened somewhere, and I'm going to find out where. I noticed too, Sally, that it's mostly come about since you took charge of things. If you've stopped leaks, I'm going to know positively what they've been, so the good

For a thorough cleansing, the cream with just the right amount of oil

Every normal skin needs two creams

Every day dust and fine particles of dirt bore deep into the pores of the skin. Ordinary washing will not reach this deepest dirt—and yet if it is allowed to stay your skin will lose its lovely clear transparent look and become dull looking.

To give your skin a thorough cleansing and one that is actually stimulating you need a cold cream made especially for the purpose. A cream made with oil—just enough to work into the pores and loosen every particle of dirt and of that particular light consistency that will not overload the pores or stretch them.

The cream that is made in just this way is Pond's *Cold* Cream. Smooth it in with your finger tips every night before retiring. After you have let it stay a minute wipe it off with a soft cloth. The grime on the cloth will convince you how thorough a cleansing the cream gives. The soft refreshed feeling it leaves will tell you how supple and fresh its nightly use will keep your skin.

For day and evening, as a base for powder, you need an entirely different cream—one that the skin will absorb instantly.

The kind of cream to hold the powder

Instead of oil (which *will* come out in a shine), an entirely different ingredient is used—one famous for its softening and soothing effect, yet absolutely free from grease. It results in a cream so delicate that it can be worn all day without danger of clogging the pores.

The cream known all over the world as having been made especially for this purpose is Pond's *Vanishing* Cream. Always smooth it on *before* you powder. Absorbed instantly it makes your skin feel and look softer and smoother at once. Powder put on over the smooth velvety surface this cream gives your skin goes on evenly and clings for hours.

Together these two creams meet every need of the skin. Use them both every day. Both are so delicate in texture they cannot clog the pores. Neither contains anything that can promote the growth of hair. The Pond's Extract Company, New York.

POND'S
Cold Cream *for cleansing*
Vanishing Cream
to hold the powder

GENEROUS TUBES—MAIL COUPON TODAY

THE POND'S EXTRACT CO.,
166 Hudson St., New York.

Ten cents (10c) is enclosed for your special introductory tubes of the two creams every normal skin needs—enough of each cream for two weeks' ordinary toilet uses.

Name.....

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work can continue if somebody should come along suddenly one of these days and marry you."

"Don't worry," laughed Sally. "And I wouldn't go to such an expense as that if I were you, Mr. Hod. It isn't necessary. If you're making money, just be satisfied with having it in your bank balance and say nothing."

But Sam was good-naturedly mulish.

"No sir! I've never had a real audit of the books since I've been in business. And this year I'm going to see where we stand."

A WEEK later an auditing company down in Springfield sent up a man whose remuneration was to be the stupendous sum of twenty dollars per day. It is perhaps the first case on record where a business man insisted on having an audit because he was making so much money it worried him.

Auditor Barriwell was a tall, slender, bookish-appearing man of thirty-eight or forty, with clothes slightly behind the prevailing fashions and a pair of tortoise-shell spectacles astride a straight nose. He was very quiet and precise in all his movements, and went about reducing the *Telegraph's* finances to fundamentals in a manner that made the sum paid him seem well expended.

Old Preston Gibbs went away on a vacation during the audit. Happy Sally knew all there was to know about the accounts, and she stayed with Barriwell hour after hour and evening after evening, sifting things down and building up a new set of books item by item.

Suddenly we began to take note that something was happening to Happy Sally. The first thing that jolted us was the way she began to do her hair. She had pretty hair—when it was dressed properly. Hitherto it had been—well, just hair. She gathered it up now, all the stray strands and "scolding locks" and did it high on her head. It sort of changed the whole contour of her profile. It came to us as a shock that Happy Sally after all was a really pretty woman.

As Barriwell continued his work in our office day after day we began to realize other things: Happy Sally was dressing differently. Hitherto she had been content to go about her daily tasks merely covered, so to speak. But now she blossomed out in dainty organdies and poplins—even for the office.

Into our office one morning burst little Jimmy Ostrander, who acted as boy-of-all-work and helped tend press.

"Hey!" he announced. "Sally Brown's got a beau and got him good! Watcher know! I seen 'em walkin' off toward Cobb Hill last night. Her and that Springfield bookkeeper. He had his arm round her, an' what's more, she had her head on his shoulder—"

It was true. Into Sally's life had come the Prince. What she saw in him was more than we older folk could tell, but others in the past have applied the same comment to ourselves; so we are in no position to criticize. We only knew that Prince Charming had remade Happy Sally, and that when that Springfield auditor left, there was going to be either a wedding or a tragedy.

When the audit was at last completed, it was a still graver auditor who confronted Sam Hod.

"I find a strange condition on your books," he announced. "During the past two years your subscription receipts fell steadily behind, as though whoever had them in charge had deliberately pilfered from you to the tune of about forty-five hundred dollars. Then suddenly it appears that the money began to come back. Day after day there are entries in the cash from sundries and 'miscellaneous receipts' which have no evident origin. About nineteen hundred dollars has been so returned in the past twelve months. Perhaps you can explain it. Anyhow, there is still a shortage of almost twenty-six hundred dollars."

The jig was up. Sally had done the best she could, and it had brought Prince Charming into her life; but old Preston Gibbs would have to face the music.

Barriwell turned to her.

"Do *you* know anything about it—Evelyn?" he asked.

Sally looked at the man she loved, then dropped her eyes. She could not deceive *him!*

"Mr. Gibbs did it," she choked. "I found it out when I began helping him with his books. I tried to cover it up because he once—he—and—my mother—" Her eyes welled with tears and the next moment she had fluttered down with her head in her arms, and Barriwell was bending over her saying things not at all consonant with the conduct of a business office.

SAM did not press the charge against poor Gibbs. The old man went out to Wyoming the following month, and all the village wondered. It was reported in our own paper that he had secured a better position out there keeping books for a brother in the sheep business.

Something else was reported in our paper shortly afterward—something more important. It ran to two columns and was "covered" by Mrs. Blakesley, our "society" reporter.

And that night when it was all over and the office was deserted, save for Sam and the motheaten scribe who records this chronicle, the old editor drew a sigh and lighted his pipe.

"It means we got to look around for another girl, Bill," he declared hopelessly. "Better run an ad' in the Classified tomorrow, I guess. But for heaven's sake, let's be *careful* in picking our next one."

The person addressed raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Why, there wasn't anything the matter with Sally," he protested. "You talk as if she was to blame for something."

"Yes, there was! *Too much efficiency,*" snapped Sam. "I like to feel as if there was a little something left for *me* to do around the office, seeing as I'm the proprietor!"

This Self-Service Age

Josh Billings used to say that "human nature is the same the world over, 'cept in New England—where it depends on circumstances." But this self-serving age makes its own circumstances and goes right on with its cafeterian habits. It says to boy and girl, man and woman: "Unless you can serve yourself, you cannot serve others."

The private schools of the country are geared to make the head, the hand and the heart of our boys and girls *serviceable*. Human helplessness, inertia, indifference and ignorance are a curse, not a blessing upon the earth. These negative qualities constitute the human parasite, as distinguished from the human producer. How we dislike him who, with physical good health and material means, yet needs an army to wait on him, morning, noon and night! How we admire the man or woman who does things and does them thoroughly and well, however slight the performance in the scale of human significance.

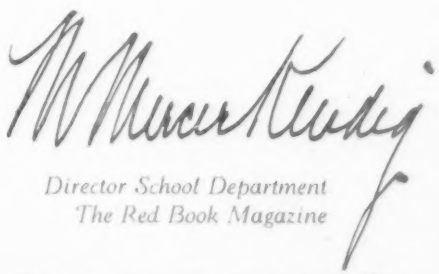
A boy coddled at home, petted and fretted over by "ma" and left to drift by "pa," is not being reared to serve himself or his fellowman. But send him through the incessant mills of a boy's school, and some progenitor's grip on life will revive in him, and the school will make of him a resourceful, daring and intelligent man.

Take the girls of seventy years ago. They didn't have one-tenth a modern girl's opportunity for an education; but they had a will and a homely way of *serving*—doing things with a physical vim and spiritual fervor that, viewed from this difficult age, seem heroic. With the modern woman's increasing civic and economic activity, it must follow that she will "mess up" the world unless she qualifies to serve not only herself but all civilization against the ills that beset it.

Into the private residential school, therefore, go the children whose parents have the wisdom of our time, who see that without a vast increase in the production of superior men and women the world will stagger backward. We don't need more people in these United States so much as we need abler and better people—men and women who can and who will inform, guide and control the destinies of the nation.

Our private schools and colleges develop citizens of this caliber and high purpose. Where self-service is a qualification, not an aim, it is one of the best foundations upon which to build a serviceable citizenry. The masters of our private schools aim to produce useful citizens. They are not interested in the production of puppets, prigs and parvenus, than which no pest is more depressing to the thrift of any nation, ancient or modern.

The publishers of The Red Book Magazine have for many years realized the value of the private school as an institution. They have established a comprehensive School Service Department which gives to readers, without charge, carefully collected information about schools throughout the United States. Please refer to the schools listed on Pages 7-8-9-10 of this issue. If there is any special information which you desire in this connection, write us.



Director School Department
The Red Book Magazine

33 West 42nd Street, New York City

WITHIN THESE WALLS—

(Continued from page 67)

the porch right into the saddle, and the horse launched out like a seagull.

The doctor they always summoned at night was Dr. Matson, a fierce old wizard who would never have been invoked if there had been a more gracious physician available.

The old villain was just putting up his horse after a long ride in the opposite direction when RoBards reined down. Dr. Matson did not wait to be invited, but slapped the saddle on the dripping back of his puffing horse, climbed aboard and was on the way before he asked: "Well, what's the matter with who this time?"

Doctors and lawyers have a right to the truth in a crisis, and RoBards was glad of the dark when he confessed the shame of self-murder that had stained the old house. He finally managed to say:

"Is there any way to—must we—have you got to let everybody know that the poor old gentleman—did it himself?"

Matson did not answer for half a mile. Then he laughed aloud:

"I get what you're driving at. I guess I can fix it."

His sardonic cackle made RoBards shudder, but when the harsh brute stood by the bedside and by laying on of hands verified the permanent retirement of the old merchant, he spoke with a strange gentleness:

"It was heart failure, Mrs. Jessamine. Your husband had strained his heart by overwork and overanxiety for you. His big heart just broke. That bottle had nothin' to do with it." He sniffed it again: "It's only an adulteration, anyway. You can't even buy honest poison nowadays. That's just bitters and water—wouldn't harm a fly. Grand old man, Mr. Jessamine. They don't make merchants like him now. It wasn't his fault that he wasn't the biggest man in New York. He fought hard and died like a soldier. And now you get some sleep, or I'll give you some *real* sleeping drops."

He began to bluster again, and they were grateful to be bullied. RoBards regarded him with awe, this great strong man breaking the withes of truth for the rescue of others.

Dr. Matson made out a certificate of heart-failure, and nobody questioned it. When Dr. Chirnside came up to preach the funeral sermon, he said that the Lord had called a good man home to well-earned rest. This old preacher was better than his creed. He would have lied too, if he had known the truth; for human sympathy is so much more divine than the acrid theologies men concoct, that he would have told the sweetest falsehoods he could frame above the white body of his parishioner, for the sake of the aching hearts that still lived.

Chapter Twenty-six

THE old man joined his little grandchildren in the cluster of young tuliptrees, and RoBards later built a fence about the knoll to make it sacred ground.

The New York papers published encomiums upon Mr. Jessamine and called him one of the merchant princes who had made New York the metropolis of the New World. A stranger reading them would have imagined him a giant striding through a great long day to a rich sunset.

The question of returning at once to town was answered by Mrs. Jessamine's inability to rise from her bed after the funeral of her husband. She had had the harder life of the two, and now she had no further task to perform except to keep a rocking-chair rocking, and to knit the air with her restless old bone-needle fingers.

Her husband had killed himself because he felt disgraced, cheated, dishonorably discharged from the army of industry. She did not kill herself; she just refused to live any longer. She resigned from the church called life. She ceased to believe in it.

Dr. Chirnside, when he came up again to her funeral, said that she died of a broken heart and like a faithful helpmeet went to join the faithful husband where he waited for her at the foot of the Throne.

And now another generation of the Jessamines was nothing more than an inscription on headstones.

Hot as it was in the city, Patty and David went back to it to escape the oppression of solemnity. Patty's face was lost in thick black veils, though her tears glistened like dew in the mesh.

But RoBards, glancing back as he drove away, noted that the house seemed to stand reliable and confident, a great strongbox in which secrets were secure.

FROM the hushed loneliness and the fragrant suavity of billowy Westchester, RoBards went down into the noisy city by the noisier train.

The children greeted him with rapture, though Immy protested:

"Papa, please don't call me baby any longer."

"All right, old lady," he laughed, and winked at Patty, who winked at him. And neither of them could see how childhood was already the past for this girl. It was only from the parental eyes that the scales had yet to fall. Their daughter was another creature from what she looked to the young men—and some not so young—who stared at her where she walked or rode in the busses on her way to school, to church, to a dancing-lesson.

RoBards did not know that Immy was already undergoing ogling, being followed, at times spoken to. She never told her father or mother of these adventures, because she did not want to worry them; she did not want them to know how much she knew; she did not want them to forbid her going about. She preferred freedom with risk, to safety in the chains even of love.

Musing upon her ignorance and goodness one evening, her father was, by a dissociation of ideas, reminded of his promise to look for Mrs. Lasher's girl Molly. It would be a partial atonement for destroying the son, if he could retrieve the daughter from a trade that was decently referred to (when it had to be) as "a fate worse than death." He rose abruptly, and said that he had to go to his office. He left Patty with a parlorful of callers who brought condolences for her in her loss of both parents.

RoBards thought that nothing could make death more hateful than to receive sympathy for it on a hot night in a crowded room. And as he sauntered the streets, he thought that nothing could make life or love more hateful than their activity on a hot night on crowded streets.

HE glanced in at many of the restaurants, the barrooms, the oyster palaces, the dance-houses, the "watering-places," the tobacco counters: but he dared not even walk down some of the streets where music came faintly through dark windows. His face was known; his true motive would not be suspected, and it would be priggish to announce it.

He saw much that was heartbreaking, much that was stomach-turning. He ventured to drift at last even to the infamous Five Points. The policemen with their stars glinting in the dark gave him some courage, but even the policemen's lives were not safe here, where murder was the cleanest thing that happened.

The thronged hovels were foul enough, but their very cellars were asquirm with men and women and children. In some of these rat-holes there were filthy soup-houses, bars, dance-dives where blacks, whites and mulattoes mixed.

The poverty was grisly. In one sink, three men with three spoons drained a penny bowl of broth. A man shared a glass of turpentine gin with his five-year-old son. Another fought with his shrieking wife over a mug of bog-poteen. Men whiffed rank tobacco at a penny a load in rented clay pipes they could not even buy, but borrowed for the occasion.

On the cellar steps, in the gutters, in the doorways and hanging out of the windows were drunkards, whole families drunk, from grandma to infant. RoBards had trouble in dodging the wavering steps of a six-year-old girl who was already a confirmed sot. Beggars for coin half pleaded, half threatened. Thugs, male and female, glared at him and cursed him for a "nob," or meditated attacks upon the "goldfinch," but their brains were too drenched for action.

He reached the old Brewery at last. The ancient distillery was now a vast anthill of swarming misery. In every dirty room, in grimy cellars beneath it, the victims of want, of disease, of vice slept or quarreled.

He glanced into the dark and reeking alley known as Murderers' Lane, but he dared not venture into it. Baffled and revolted, he returned to Broadway, a Dante coming up from the pit of horror.

If Molly were in the Points, she was beyond redemption. If she were in a higher circle of hell, she would not listen to him.

The secret of having beautiful hair

How famous movie stars keep their hair soft and silky, bright, fresh-looking and luxuriant

NO one can be really attractive, without beautiful well-kept hair.

Study the pictures of these beautiful women. Just see how much their hair has to do with their appearance.

Beautiful hair is not a matter of luck, it is simply a matter of care.

You, too, can have beautiful hair, if you care for it properly.

In caring for the hair, proper shampooing is the most important thing.

It is the shampooing which brings out all the real life and lustre, the natural wave and color, and makes your hair soft, fresh and luxuriant.

While your hair must have frequent and regular washing to keep it beautiful, it cannot stand the harsh effect of ordinary soaps. The free alkali in ordinary soaps soon dries the scalp, makes the hair brittle and ruins it.

That is why leading motion picture stars and discriminating women, everywhere, now use Mulsified cocoanut oil shampoo. This clear, pure and entirely greaseless product cannot possibly injure, and it does not dry the scalp or make the hair brittle, no matter how often you use it.

When oily, dry or dull

If your hair is too oily, or too dry; if it is dull and heavy, lifeless, stiff and gummy; if the strands cling together, and it feels harsh and disagreeable to the touch, or if it is full of dandruff, it is all due to improper shampooing.

You will be delighted to see how easy it is to keep your hair looking beautiful, when you use Mulsified cocoanut oil shampoo.

The quick, easy way

Two or three teaspoonfuls of Mulsified in a cup or glass with a little warm water is sufficient to cleanse the hair and scalp thoroughly.

Simply pour the Mulsified evenly over the hair and rub it in. It makes an abundance of rich, creamy lather, which rinses out quickly and easily, removing every particle of dust, dirt, dandruff and excess oil—the chief causes of all hair troubles.

After a Mulsified shampoo you will find the hair will dry quickly and evenly and have the appearance of being much thicker and heavier than it really is. It keeps the scalp soft and healthy, the hair fine and silky, bright, fresh-looking and fluffy, wavy and easy to manage.

You can get Mulsified at any drug store or toilet-goods counter, anywhere in the world. A 4-ounce bottle should last for months.

Splendid for children—Fine for men

Mulsified

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

Cocoanut Oil Shampoo

At any rate, he could not hope to find this one among the thousands of New York's "lost" women by seeking for her. He went slowly to his home in St. John's Square despondent and morose, feeling himself soiled by his mere inspection of the muck-heap.

AFTERWARD he kept his eyes alert for Molly, but it was months before he found her. She had been dragged into court for working the "panel game."

When she was arraigned, RoBards happened to be in court on behalf of another client. He saw Molly pink and coquettish, impudently fascinating, and so ready for deportation or conquest that when he advanced to her, she accepted him as a gallant before she recognized him as a neighbor.

"Aren't you Molly Lasher?" RoBards asked.

"I was."

He entreated her to go home, and promised that the judge would free her at his request, but Molly was honest enough to say:

"It wouldn't work, Mr. RoBards. I aint built for that life. I've outgrowed it."

He spoke to the judge, who sent her to the Magdalen Home instead of to Sing Sing.

It seemed to RoBards better to leave Mrs. Lasher in ignorance than to certify the ghastly truth. He had trouble enough in store for him within his own precincts.

War, for one thing, shook the nation. President Polk called for men and money to confirm the annexation of the Texas Republic and to suppress the Mexican Republic.

With a wife and children to support, and the heritage of bills from his father-in-law to pay, RoBards felt that patriotism was a luxury beyond his means. But Harry Chalender went out with the first troops, and by various illegitimate devices managed to worm himself into the very forefront of danger.

Other sons of important families bribed their way to the zone of death and won glory or death or both at Cerro Gordo, Chapultepec and Churubusco. The town had a good laugh over the capture of General Santa Ana's wooden leg, and the return of the troops was a glorious holiday.

Harry Chalender had been the second man to enter the gates of Mexico City, and he marched home with "Captain" in front of his name and his arm in a graceful sling.

When he met Patty, he said: "Thank the Lord the Greasers left me one wing to throw round you."

He hugged her hard and kissed her, and then wrung the hand of RoBards, who could hardly attack a wounded hero, or deny him some luxury after a hard campaign. RoBards saw with dread that his wife had grown fifteen years younger under the magic of her old lover's salute; her cheek was stained with a blush of girlish confusion.

That night as she dressed for a ball in honor of the soldiers, Patty begged her husband once more to lend a hand at pulling her corset laces. When he refused sulkily, she laughed and kissed him with that long-lost pride in his long-dormant jealousy. But her amusement cost him dear, and his youth was not restored by hers.

For months his heart seemed to be skewered and toasted like the meat on the turning spit in the restaurant windows.

And then the word California assumed a vast importance like a trumpet-call on a still afternoon. It was a neglected strip of territory of which Uncle Sam had just relieved the prostrate Mexico. People said that it was built upon a solid ledge of gold. But much as RoBards would have liked to be rich, he could not shake off his chains.

Harry Chalender, however, joined the Argonauts. His finances were in need of some heaven-sent bonanza, and he had no scruples against leaving his creditors in the lurch.

When he called to pay his farewells, RoBards chanced to be at home. He waited with smoldering wrath to resent any effort to salute Patty's cheek. The returned soldier had perhaps some license, but the outbound gold-seeker could be knocked down or kicked on his way if he presumed.

The always unexpectable Chalender stupefied him by fastening his eyes not on Patty, but on Immy, and by daring to say:

"You're just the age, Immy, just the image of your mother when I first asked her to marry me. The first nugget of gold I find in California I'll bring back for our wedding-ring."

This frivolity wrought devastation in RoBards' soul. It awakened him for the first time to the fact that his little daughter had stealthily become a woman. He blenched to see on her cheek the blush that had returned of late to Patty's, to see in her eyes a light of enamored maturity.

The shock of discovery filled RoBards with disgust of himself. He felt faint, and averting his gaze from his daughter, turned to her mother to see how the blow struck her. Patty had not been so unaware of Immy's advance. But her shock was one of jealousy, and of terror at the realization that she was on the way to grandmotherhood.

RoBards was so hurt for her in her dismay, that he could have sprung at Chalender and beaten him to the floor, crying: "How dare you cease to flirt with my beautiful wife?"

But this was quite too impossible an impulse to retain for a moment in his revolted soul. He stood inept, and smirked with Patty and murmured: "Good-by! Good luck!"

They were both pale and distraught when Chalender had gone. But Immy was rosy and intent.

Chapter Twenty-seven

LONGING for opportunities to exploit the suppressed braveries in his soul, RoBards found nothing to do but run to fires. There were enough of these, and the flames fell alike upon the just and the unjust. Christ Church in Ann Street went up in blazes; the Bowery Theater burned

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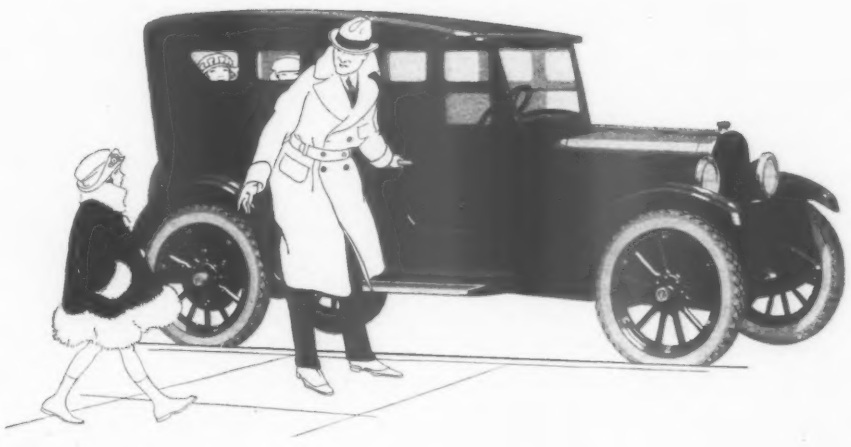


down for the fourth time; a sugar-house in Duane Street was next, two men being killed and RoBards badly bruised by a tumbling wall. The stables of Kipp and Brown were consumed, with over a hundred screaming horses; the omnibus stables of the Murphys roasted to death a hundred and fifty horses, and took with them two churches, a parsonage and a school. While this fire raged, another broke out in Broome Street, another in Thirty-fifth Street and another in Seventeenth. The Park Theater was burned for only the second time in its fifty years of life; but it stayed burned.

And then Patty succeeded in persuading her husband to resign from the fire department and remove his boots and helmet from the basket under the bed.

This was the knell of his youth, and he felt that he had been put out to grass like an old fire-horse, but for years after, his heart leaped when some old brazen-mouthed bell gave tongue. He left it to others, however, to take out the engine and chase the sparks.

He had come to the port of slippered evenings, but monotony was not yet his portion. For there were domestic fire-bells now.

PATTY and Immy were mutual combustibles. They had reached the ages when the mother forgets her own rebellious youth as completely as if she had drunk Lethe water, and when the daughter demands liberty for herself and imposes fetters on her elders.

Patty developed the strictest standards for Immy and was amazed at the girl's indifference to them. All of Patty's quondam audacities in dress and deportment were remembered as conformities to strict convention. Immy's audacities were regarded as downright indecencies.

Finally Patty had recourse to authority and told her husband that the city was too wicked for the child. She—even Patty—who had once bidden New York good-by with tears, denounced it now in terms borrowed from Dr. Chirnside's tirades!

Immy was mutinous and sullen. She refused to go, and threatened to run off with any one of a half-dozen beaux, none of whom her parents could endure.

This deadlock was ended by aid from a dreadful quarter. By a strange repetition of events, the cholera, which had driven Patty into RoBards' arms and into the country with him—the cholera which had not been seen again and for whose destruction the Croton Water party had taken full glory—the cholera came again.

It began in the cesspool of the Points and ravaged the tenements, then swept the town. Five thousand lives the cholera took before it went its mysterious way.

Coming of a little bolder generation, Immy was not so panic-stricken as her mother had been. But since all her friends deserted the town, she saw no reason for tarrying.

The country was not so dull as she had feared. The air was spicy with romance; fauns danced in the glades and sat on the stone fences to pipe their unspeakable tunes; nymphs laughed in the brooks, and dryads commended the trees.

The railroad made it easy for young bucks to run out on a train farther in an hour or two than they could have ridden in a day in the good old horseback times. A fashion for building handsome country places was encouraged by the cholera scare. White Plains began to grow in elegance, and Robbins' Mills changed its homely name to Kensico, after an old Indian chief.

Before many days Immy was busier than in town. Young men and girls made the quiet yard resound with laughter. Picnics filled the groves with romance, and dances called gay cliques to lamplit parlors and to moonlit porches.

Immy seemed to gather lovers as a bright candle summons foolish moths. Patty and her husband were swiftly crowded back upon a shelf of old age whence they watched, incredulous, and unremembering, the very same activities with which they had amazed their own parents.

Two lovers gradually crowded the rest aside. The more attractive to Immy's parents was a big brave youth named Halleck. He had joined the old Twenty-seventh Regiment recently reorganized as the Seventh, just in time to be called out in the Astor Place Riots.

Young Halleck was with the Seventh when it marched down to check the vast mob that had overwhelmed the police and had driven back a troop of calvary whose horses were maddened by the cries and the confinement. The populace roared down upon the old Seventh—and received three volleys before it returned to civil life.

Halleck had been shot with a pistol and battered with paving-stones. To RoBards the lawyer he was a civic hero of the finest sort. The only thing Immy had against him was that her parents recommended him so highly.

LOVE that will not be coërced turned in protest toward the youth whom her parents most cordially detested—Dr. Chirnside's son Ernest, a pallid young bigot, more pious than his father, and as solemn as Cotton Mather. Patty wondered how any daughter of hers could endure the milksop. But Immy cultivated him because of his very contrast with her own hilarity.

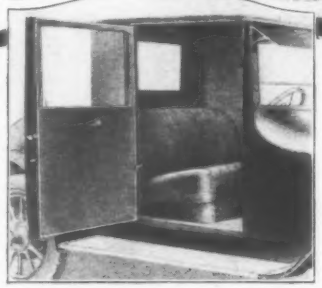
His young pedantries, his fierce denunciations of the dancing, the drinking, the flirting, all the wickedness of his companions, his solemn convictions that man was born lost in Adam's sin and could only be redeemed from eternal torment by certain dogmas, fascinated Immy, who had overfed on dances and flippancies.

RoBards could not help witnessing from his library window the development of this curious religious romance. There was an old iron settee under his window, and a rosebush thereby; the young fanatics would sit there to debate their souls.

Sometimes RoBards, listening with his pen poised above an unfinished word, would seem to understand her devotion to young Chirnside, her acceptance of his intolerant tyranny and the insults he heaped upon her as a wretch whom his God might have foredoomed from past eternity to future eternity. He would talk of election and the conviction of sin, and of salvation.

And Immy would drink it down.

At last there came an evening when



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Hupmobile

young Chirnside called in manifest exaltation. He led Immy to the settee beneath the library window, and RoBards could not resist the opportunity to overhear.

He went into his library and softly closed the door. He tiptoed to a vantage-point and listened.

Young Chirnside coughed and stammered and beat about the bush for a maddening while before he came to his thesis, which was that the Lord had told him to make Immy his wife. He had come to beg her to listen to him and Heaven. He had brought a little ring along for the betrothal and—and—how about it? His combination of sermon and proposal ended in a homeliness that proved his sincerity. After all that exordium, the point was—how about it?

RoBards waited as breathlessly as his prospective son-in-law. Immy did not speak for a terrible while. And then she sighed, and rather moaned than said:

"Ernest, I am honored beyond my dreams by what you have said. To be the wife of so good a man as you would be heaven. But am I good enough for you?"

"Immy!" Chirnside gasped. "You're not going to tell me you've been wicked!"

"I've been wicked enough, but not very wicked—considering. The thing I must tell you about is—it's terribly hard to tell you, dear. But you ought to know—you have a right to know. And when you know, you may not think—you may not think—you may feel that you wouldn't care to marry me. I wouldn't blame you—I'd understand, dear—but—"

RoBards was stabbed with a sudden knowledge of what tortured her thought. He wanted to cry out to her; "Don't tell! Don't speak! I forbid you!"

But that would have betrayed his contemptible position as eavesdropper. And after all, what right had he to rebuke such honesty? She knew her soul. She was inspired perhaps with the uncanny wisdom of young lovers.

And so RoBards, guessing what blighting knowledge Immy was about to unfold, stood in the dark and listened. Tears of pity for her burned through his clenched eyelids and dripped bitterly into his quivering mouth.

Unseeing and unseen, he heard his child murmuring her little tragedy to the awe-smitten boy at her side. She seemed as pitifully beautiful as some white young leper whispering through a rag:

"Unclean!"

What would this pious youth think now of the God that put his love and this girl to such a test? Would he howl blasphemies at Heaven? Would he cower away from the accursed woman, or would he fling his arms about her and mystically heal her by the divinity of his yearning?

RoBards could almost believe that Jud Lasher down there in the walls was also quickened with suspense. His term in hell might depend on this far-off consequence of his deed.

This remarkable story by America's most distinguished novelist-historian comes to specially interesting episodes in the forthcoming March installment. Be sure to read it.

CONSCIENCE

(Continued from page 61)

for knowledge; the big lawyer put his imprimatur on the knowledge, not on the expression of it; the Cabinet minister indorsed his views, whether he had written them out or not, and it was his views the public paid for, not the expression of them. But in this Grebe article the public would not be paying for any knowledge it contained, nor for any serious views; it would pay for a peep into the mind of their idol. "And his mind will be mine!" thought Taggart. "But not one of them would spend his money to peep into my mind, if he knew it was my mind." He kicked the leg of his chair, got up, and sat down again.

With a public so gullible—what did it matter? They lapped up anything and asked for more. They would probably be the first to despise him for having such scruples. Yes! But because a man was gullible and easy-going, wasn't he all the more entitled to protection? He rose again, and made a tour of the disheveled room. The man at the other table raised his head and said:

"You seem a bit on your toes."

Taggart put his elbows on the mantelpiece behind him, and stared down at his stable-companion.

"I've got to write some drivel in *The Lighthouse* for Georgie Grebe to sign. It's just struck me that it's a fraud on the public. What do you say, Counter?"

"In a way, so's nearly everything else. What about it?"

"If it's a fraud, I don't want to do it—that's all."

His colleague whistled.

"My dear chap, here am I writing an article 'From the Man on the Course'—I haven't been on a course for years."

"Oh! Well—that's venial."

"It's all venial in our game. Shut your eyes, and swallow. You're only deviling."

"Ah!" said Taggart. "Give a thing a decent label, and it's decent."

"I say, old man, what did you have for breakfast?"

"Look here, Counter, I'm inclined to think I've struck a snag. It never occurred to me before."

"Well, don't let it occur to you again. Think of old Dumas; I've heard he put his name to sixty volumes in one year. Has that done him any harm?"

Taggart rumpled his hair, reddish and rather stiff.

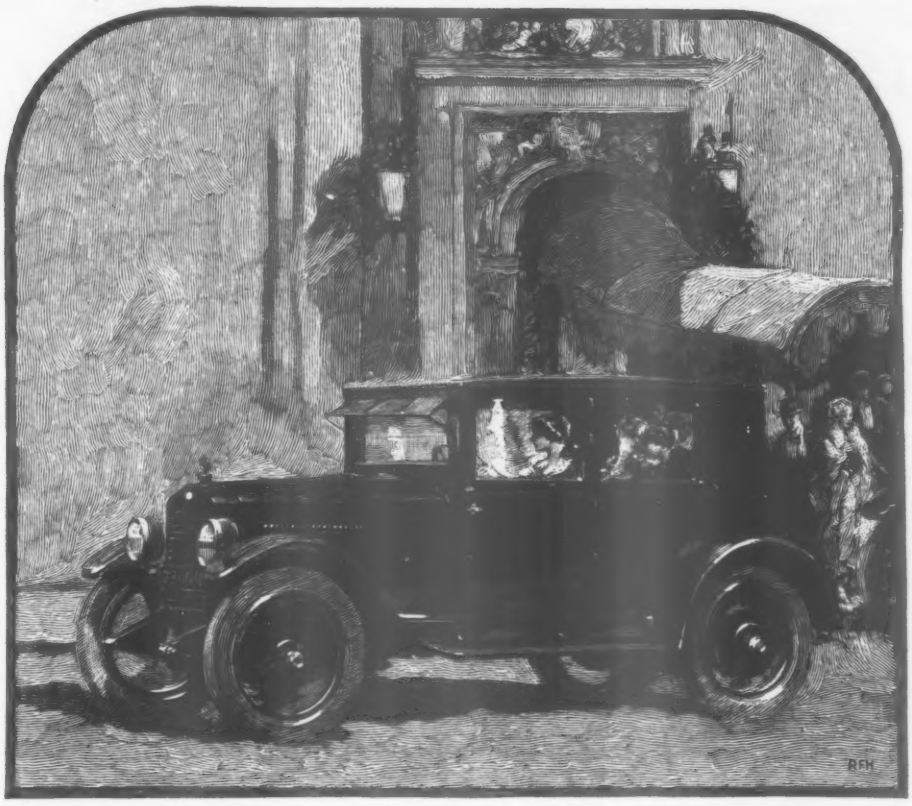
"Damn!" he said.

Counter laughed.

"You get a fixed screw for doing what you're told. I can't see that you need worry. Papers must be sold. Georgie Grebe—that's some stunt."

"Blast Georgie Grebe!"

He had said it with such energy as to deprive himself of the power of continuing either argument or article. Everything now would be in the nature of a climb-down, or anti-climax. He took his hat and went out, conscious of a prolonged whistle following. He spent the



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That simply meant they wanted to put their investment in chassis quality and dependability, rather than accept lesser mechanical value in a closed car.

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next day doing other jobs, trying to persuade himself that he was a crank, and gingerly feeling the mouths of journalists. He got nothing from those mouths but the opinion that he was making a fuss about nothing. What was the matter with deviling? With life at such pressure, what else could you have? And yet for the life of him he could not persuade himself to go on with the thoughts of Georgie Grebe. He remembered suddenly that his father had changed the dogmas of his religion at forty-five, and thereby lost a cure of souls. He was very unhappy; it was like discovering that he had inherited tuberculosis.

ON Friday Taggart was sent for by the chief.

"Morning, Taggart; I'm just back. Look here, this leader for tomorrow—it's nothing but a string of statements. Where's my style?"

Taggart shifted his as yet inconsiderable weight from foot to foot.

"Well, sir," he said, "I thought perhaps you'd like to put that in yourself, for a change. The facts are all right."

The chief stared.

"My good fellow, do you suppose I've got time for that? Anybody could have written this; I can't sign it as it stands. Tone it up."

Taggart took the article from the chief's hand.

"I don't know that I can," he said; "I'm—" and stopped in confusion.

The chief said kindly:

"Aren't you well?"

Taggart disclaimed.

"Private trouble?"

"No."

"Well, get on with it, then. How's the Grebe article turned out?"

"It hasn't."

"How d'you mean?"

Taggart felt his body stiffening, and wondered if his hair were standing up more than usual.

"The fact is I can't write it."

"Good gracious, man, any drivel will do, so long as it's got a flavor of some sort to carry the name."

Taggart swallowed.

"That's it. Is it quite playing the game with the public, sir?"

The chief seemed to loom larger suddenly.

"Really!" he said. "I don't follow you, Mr. Taggart."

Taggart blurted out: "I don't want to write anyone else's stuff in the future, unless it's just news or facts."

The chief's face grew very red.

"I pay you to do certain work. If you don't care to carry out instructions, we can dispense with your services. What's the matter with you, Taggart?"

Taggart replied with a wry smile:

"I'm afraid I'm suffering from a fit of conscience, sir. Isn't it a matter of commercial honesty?"

The chief sat back in his swivel chair and gazed at him for quite twenty seconds.

"Well," he said at last in an icy voice, "I have never been so insulted. Good morning! You are at liberty."

Taggart laid down the sheets of paper, walked stiffly to the door, and turned.

"Awfully sorry, sir," he said. "Can't help it."

The chief bowed distantly, and Taggart went out to his liberty.....

For three months he had enjoyed it. Journalism was overstocked, his name not well known. He was too shy and too proud to ask for any recommendation from Conglomerated Journals—nor could he ever bring himself to explain the reason for which he had "got the hoof." To do so would be to claim a higher standard of morality than his fellows, and he couldn't bear the thought. He had carried on well enough for two months, but the last few weeks had brought him very low. To save every penny, he had been obliged at last to send his wife and little girl down to a country cottage; he could still pay their scot there for a week or two, so long as he practically did not pay his own. Hence the Park, for yesterday he had given up his room. If he didn't get a journalistic job this week, he would give up trying, and take to road-sweeping, or any mortal thing he could get. But the more he brooded over his conduct, the more he thought that he was right, and the less inclined he was to speak of it.

Loyalty to the chief he had insulted by taking such an attitude, dislike of being thought a fool, beyond all, the dread of "swanking," kept him silent. When asked why he had left Conglomerated Journals, he returned the answer always, "Disagreement on a matter of principle," and refused to enter into details. But a feeling had got about that he was a bit of a crank; for though no one else at Conglomerated Journals knew exactly why he had vanished, Counter had spread the news that he had blasted Georgie Grebe, and refused to write his article. Some one else had done it, and been glad of the job.

TAGGART read the production with the irritated thought: "I could have done it a lot better." Inefficient deviling still hurt one who had deviled long and efficiently without a qualm. When the article which had not been written by Sir Cutman Kane appeared—he swore aloud. It was muck, no more like the one Sir Cutman would have signed if Taggart had written it, than the boots of Taggart were like the boots of the chief, who seemed to wear a fresh pair every day, with cloth tops. He read the chief's new leaders with melancholy, spotting the innumerable deficiencies of style supplied to the chief by whoever it was now wrote them. His square, red, cheerful face had a bitter look while he was reading; and when he had finished, he would rumple his stiff hair.

But he was sturdy, and never got so far as calling himself a fool for his pains, though week by week he felt more and more that his protest had been vain and and void; it was the custom, decently garbed in a word-cloak through which most people could not, or would not see.

Sitting against the ranger's paling, listening to the birds, he had a rather dreamy feeling about it all. Queer things, human beings! So damned uncritical! Had he not been just like that himself for years and years? The power of a label—that was what struck him, sitting there. Label a thing decently, and it *was* decent! Ah, but, "Rue by any other name would smell as sour!" Conscience—it was the devil!

Taggart was becoming a philosopher.

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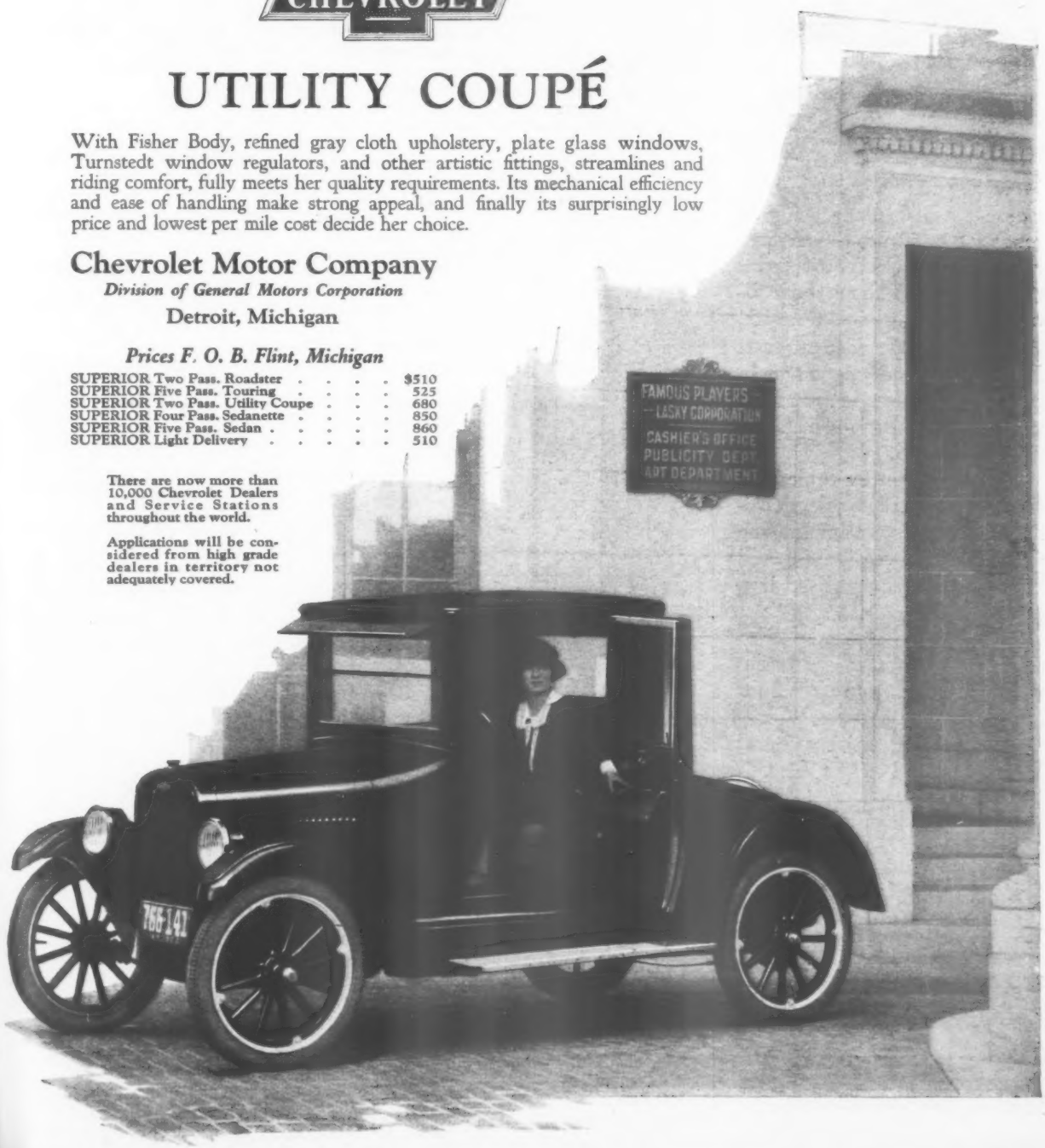

THE SAND PILE

(Continued from page 36)

"I can't, Buddy," he said humbly. "I never knew how."

Into the child's face leaped the look of one who has knowledge he may impart to one for whom he cares. It was the look his mother gave to him night after night, and he in turn glowed with it as he lifted the torch. "I'll show you how," he triumphed.

"I can't," Mercer said.

"Oh, yes, you can," Buddy declared. "My name's just like your name, so your name's just like mine. Write what I wrote, and it'll be right."

For a moment Mercer hesitated, held back by the thought that he could not learn from his own son these rudiments of the education he had always lacked; but the eagerness in Buddy's face urged him into acceptance. Slowly he began to trace duplicates of the words Buddy had formed. "That's it," the boy rejoiced when the copy came true, even to the inclusion of the mystic "*jr*," which somehow bothered the man. "Is that right?" he puzzled.

Buddy scanned it seriously. "Well, maybe that means I'm Buddy," he decided, and solemnly erased it. "Write it again," he ordered in such an unconscious imitation of Winnie's voice that Mercer smiled even before he sighed. But he set down over and over again the symbols of his name. "Now you'll know how," Buddy reassured him.

"H-st!" Old Philo's whisper rustled over them. "Burrow in," he counseled. "You couldn't get up in time." In quick understanding of the warning Mercer dug into the pile, covering himself with the warm sand. "Keep perfectly quiet, Buddy," he warned the boy.

"Is it Indians?"

"Worse."

The child, catching the cue with the quickness of a childhood shadowed by sorrow, pretended to resume his play. Footsteps passed on the wall above them. A long time later they repassed. Then again old Philo's whisper cleaved downward. "Tell him to come out," he bade Buddy. Without the laughter of play, the boy helped the man from his hiding. "Tomorrow," he said gravely, "I'll teach you some more."

"All right, Buddy," Mercer said, and once more went up the queer ladder of Philo's making. "I guess it's a beanstalk," Buddy smiled, but it was Philo who gave back his smile. "He's a smart little feller, too," the old man said as once more they watched the child's departure.

THROUGH days all too short the strange game of the sand pile continued. Philo, constituting himself the watcher on the wall, managed out of the deftness of his thirty years in prison, and his own position of trustworthiness, to divert the occasionally passing guard from inquiry about his companion. For golden hours Tom and Buddy played the game of teacher and student which the child devised. Day after day the boy brought to the play-task some message from his mother that struck the chords of Mercer's heart. "*L-o-v-e*" was the first word, other than his name, which the man learned to spell, and "*h-o-p-e*" was the second. "Tell her that's just about all there's to life," he bade Buddy, but on the next day Buddy returned with a connotation on the text. "Mummy says hope and love aren't all there is," he explained to his father with that seriousness which marked all his memory efforts. "She says to tell you there's God. You spell Him this way." He wrote with slow reverence. "He knows everything, and He sees that everything comes out all right. Mummy knows Him. She talks to Him lots and lots of times. I know my prayers. Do you know yours?"

"I never learned any."

"Didn't you?" Puzzled wonder held back the zeal of the teacher. "Didn't you want to know them?"

"Nobody ever taught me. I didn't have a mother like yours, Bud."

"Nobody else has," the boy said proudly. "Don't you even know the 'Our Father'?" he queried. To his father's denial he went on: "Then I'll say it over for you till you learn." And over and over, the man repeating phrase for phrase after him, he said the oldest plea of Christianity. "'And forgive us our trespasses,'" he stressed, "'as we forgive them who trespass against us.' Mummy says that's the part I must always remember most. Why must I remember that more than the daily-bread part?"

"Because you're my son, I guess," Mercer said, seeing all too well why Winnie sought to keep the boy from that mad lust for vengeance which had wrecked their lives.

"Do people always get what they pray for, Daddy?" the child asked him suddenly, thrusting him against that wall where the direct questioning of childhood transfixes men and women.

"I guess so," he compromised between his own despair and a wish to keep the boy's faith burning.

"Well, Mummy prays all the time, and I pray for you to come to us. Do you think God'll send you soon?"

"I don't know, Bud."

"Do you pray?"

"I'll try."

"Will you pray that He'll send you back to us for my birthday?"

"When is it?"

"Don't you remember?"

"I've had a lot to think about," he apologized.

"Why, it's the twenty-fifth," the boy said.

"Two weeks from tomorrow, fifteen days; I don't see how you could forget it—"

"I wont forget it again."

HOW could he have forgotten it, he wondered, remembering now that time of drowning fear when Winnie had gone down into the valley of the shadow? He had thought that the date of that day of pain and of glory had been

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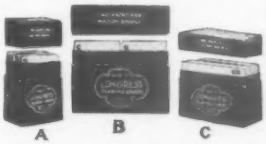

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seared upon his brain. Compunction, not only for Buddy but for Winnie, gripped him in its vise. Wasn't it like him, he asked himself, to think he was caring for their lives when all he had done was to bring misery and want to them? But he'd atone, he promised himself, as soon as he could get away.

"I'm going to have a birthday party," Buddy was saying. "Mummy's going to make me a big cake with frosting on, and seven candles, and maybe we'll have ice-cream. Don't you think you can come to my party?" He gave the invitation with that anxiety which seemed to underlie the wistfulness of the child's longing. The memory of old Philo's boast of the tortures he would endure for the sake of return to a boy like Buddy winged his decision. "I'll be there, Bud," he promised, "if I have to wade through blood to come to you."

"Can I tell Mummy?"

"Not yet," he bound him. "It's a secret just between you and me."

He could not resist, however, telling Philo of the fact of the impending event, although he concealed from the old man his intention. Philo's eyes gleamed in delight. "I'll make him a present," he said, and retreated into a mysteriousness which would have amused Mercer had he been less engrossed in his problem of how to compass his escape. "He's such a good little boy," he murmured, staring after the child who sped across the lots toward home. "Do you think I could just shake hands with him tomorrow?"

IT was the irony of his twisted life that the old man's pathetic desire to touch just once the garment of childhood should have brought about the catastrophe of discovery; for it was in the moment when he had dropped from the wall that the guard turned the corner and saw him. "Get in the sand there, the way your Daddy does," the old man ordered Buddy on the instant he realized their plight, "and don't you move for a long time, nor until everything is quiet. Then you run home as fast as you can." He turned to Mercer, who stood, contemplating, he knew, the chance of flight. "It's no use now," he said. "Just wait here till they come. We'll say we fell off. They wont believe it, but they can't prove anything." He took the ladder from the other man. "They'll surely search you," he said, "and they may not go through me. I'll take a chance."

Their worst fear died when the guard marshaled them off without search of the sand pile; but Mercer's old despair rushed back over him when he faced Torrens once more.

"So you tried to get away?" the Warden said to him. "I suppose you know what that means? Another conviction after you've served every day of this. Mercer, haven't you any sense?" His voice grated in exasperation. "Don't you know that your one chance, your only chance, is to sit tight?" Wasn't that the message Winnie had sent him? How did it happen that the very words were the same? Had he seen her, talked with her, won her over to his point of view? Jealous suspicion surged into Mercer's brain.

"I know I aint got no chance at all with you here," he said.

"You've a good deal to learn," Torrens said. He stared at the man with an anger he seemed to strive to control. "I've given you every chance I decently could," he went on, "and you have thrown every one of them away. I can't do any more for you until you decide to help me. I have to obey rules just as well as you do. That's why I must do something I don't want to do. You'll have to go into solitary, Mercer."

WITH all the hatred Mercer's life had concentrated against the more fortunate, he glared at Torrens, but Torrens was not looking at him. He had turned to Philo. "It's the first time in thirty years you've broken a rule," he said, "but it doesn't change the fact that you have to take your medicine too." The old man held silence, and the Warden turned to Mercer. "The worst of it is," he said, "that you miss visiting day. Do you want me to write Winnie that she's not to come?"

With the swiftness of the trapped, Mercer realized the alternatives. If Winnie came, Mercer could not see her, but Torrens would. If Torrens wrote Winnie the message, it would open the door to his return into her life. "I'll write it myself," he said.

"You'll—what?"

"I'll write it—if you'll dare send it."

"Go ahead."

He sat down at the Warden's desk and laboriously framed his first epistle. "Winnie," it ran, "don't come now. Love. thomas mercer."

"I thought you didn't know how to write," said Torrens.

"I'm learning," said Mercer.

The Warden looked inquiringly at Philo, but the old man gazed imperturbably ahead. He fell into step beside the younger man as they passed out to the waiting guard. "Don't you forget Buddy's birthday," he muttered in that strange impassivity of lips which marked his secret speech. "I'll have that present."

He must have worked upon it through all the hours when Mercer wrestled with the seven devils of despair in the cell where he was held in solitary confinement in the fortnight which followed. On the morning of the twenty-fourth, the trusty who passed him on his way out of solitary, slipped to him an unsigned note. Perhaps with a recollection of Mercer's limitations, all it said was: *"Tomorrow 25. See me."* But he knew that it had come from Philo, and hope lifted in him that the old man had devised some way to help him keep his word to Buddy.

He wondered, however, how he could see the other. To his surprise he found him working in the chair-shop to which he had been returned. The old man gave him no apparent heed as the day wore on, but as he passed him at the end of the work-time, he pressed into his hand a file, murmuring, "Tomorrow night," as he went.

That night, in his own cell, Mercer speculated on how the file would win his freedom. So pitifully small and utterly inadequate did it seem, that he could have laughed at any idea of its use had he not heard through the prison underground such frequent references to its efficiency. In baffled realization, however, that the

"No other woman is half so lovely"

AT the beginning of Jack's and Sally's engagement, all their friends rejoiced, while the envious others wondered, "How long will it last?" For Jack was a man of rare magnetism, whom all women liked.

Tonight they had been married five years, and his every glance, his every thought, was for her alone.

"There's no one like you, Sally," he said. "You're as pretty now as the day I met you!" She only smiled at him out of tender eyes, while he watched a little dimple deepen.

"No other woman is half so lovely," he thought. "It's her complexion that is her greatest charm. And she belongs to *me!*"

Quite true, she was his; but then, too, you see, he *still* belonged to *her*.

"You're as pretty now as the day I met you!"

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Using Rouge Rightly

By MME. JEANNETTE

The correct use of rouge is not so generally understood as it should be. Rouge, like perfume, is something to be employed with restraint and moderation, lest it defeat its own ends.

Judicious tinting of the skin with rouge delicately heightens the color and imparts sparkle to the eyes.

Blend the rouge outward with chamois or the tips of the fingers. This fine shading prevents the abrupt line which is often the only way that tinting can be detected. So applied, and well blended with powder, it produces a soft, natural flush.

Pompeian Bloom is a rouge for gentlewomen. The medium shade, especially, is very popular with girls and young matrons of daintiness and refinement.

—:—

The lip stick, like rouge, must be used with discrimination. It should be applied to the inside of the lip and then worked out with the tip of the tongue to the natural lip-edge. Pompeian Lip Stick is harmless, prevents chapping, and gives a most realistic effect when correctly applied.

—:—

Each night cleanse the pores by bathing the face in warm water with a baby sponge or softest possible wash cloth, and dry with an unstarched towel. Then a coat of Pompeian Night Cream (a cold cream) patted on delicately with the tips of the fingers, just enough so that the pores, opened by the warm water, may be thoroughly cleansed. Do not rub. Just cover the face with the cream and remove with absorbent cotton.

Rinse the face again with warm water to take away all traces of the cream; then bathe with cold water to close the pores, using gentle strokes with the same fine sponge. It is very important not to roughen or irritate the skin by hard rubbing.

—:—

If your skin is of the oily type, you should not use a greasy cream by day, confining your use of such preparation to retiring time.

In the daytime use Pompeian Day Cream, a vanishing cream, almost greaseless. This will serve to counteract the excess of oil in your skin and to prevent shine, giving a perfect foundation for powder.

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time was too short and he too unskilled in its use to make it of value, he felt that he was simply beating his head against the bars that another man might have sawed. Time and time again he sought to set it biting into the steel bars, but the sound of its snarling seemed to him too startlingly loud to permit its continuance. He dared not take the chance of being returned to the solitary, he decided as the night wore on. At dawn of the day when he had promised to go to Buddy, he could see no way to keep that promise, but he stepped forth, at the guard's unlocking of his door, in grim determination that he would not fail.

In the shop he devised an excuse which brought him near Philo, giving back to him the steel in signal of its uselessness. Philo's pale eyes gleamed some message which Mercer could not understand, but its hopefulness was evident through the dragging hours. At noon, as they fell into the military step which was part of Torrens' reforms within the penitentiary, Philo's hand touched his once more. This time Mercer's fingers closed on a bulk bigger than the file. He dared not look down, but he knew, as he groped over its shape, that the old man had given him a key. But what was it for? The door of the cell? But would it work? And if it did, what then? How could he get to the outer yard? But it was the beginning of the escape, he told himself, flinging a look of gratitude to the other. But why was Philo doing it? Was he in Torrens' plan to trap him again? Or did he really want him to get away? He'd have to risk it, anyhow. Buddy would be waiting.

Interminably the afternoon dragged. In the chair-shop the heat grew unbearable. No breath of air stirred. The hush of an impending midsummer storm hung low on the air. Men lagged in their labors even beneath the eye of authority, which in turn drowsed. Philo moved around the table with a subterfuge of getting rattan. "I have Buddy's present," he said to Mercer. "I'll give it to you tonight as you pass my cell. The guard changes at nine. Try then. I'll be watching." He went back to his work.

THE afternoon darkened into sullen clouds. At supper in the great dining-hall even the usual silence seemed to Mercer to have taken on new ominousness. There was a subtle restlessness pervading the place, affecting men and guards. So pervasive was it that it followed him to his cell, where he sat, counting the minutes. He could hear the rumble of coming thunder. Would it help him or hinder him? He heard the prison clock strike eight—then the one stroke of the quarter, the two strokes of the half, and again the one of the third quarter of the hour. Then, ponderously, it began the stroke of nine, the hour of changing the guard. A peal of thunder crashed over the prison. Slowly Mercer slipped into the lock the key that Philo had given him. For an instant it stuck, then grated, then turned. The door was open. Softly he passed through it, and just as softly closed it after him. Then, noiselessly, he crept round the turn of the corridor toward the cell where the old man would be waiting.

As he turned, he thought that he heard a footstep back of him in the hall he had just left. Peering backward, he saw the guard, and sped on toward Philo's cell as to sanctuary. Would he let him in? Would he help him now? It would be the test, he thought grimly. If he didn't, well, there was nothing to do but fight for it. Not without a struggle would they take him back to solitary. He had to go to Buddy now!

He clutched at the door of Philo's cell. "Let me in," he whispered, commanding rather than entreating in his peril. The door moved inward. "How'd you know I could?" the old man whispered. Then they fell silent as footsteps went past.

When they died away, Philo spoke again under cover of another rumble of thunder. "Here's the something for the little boy," he said. "I made it all myself." In the darkness Mercer had to feel it to learn that it was a box, covered with shells, each pierced and sewed into place. "It's pretty colors in the daylight," Philo said. "I hope he'll like it."

"Oh, sure he will," Mercer gave reassurance for gratitude, although the thought came to him that it was a toy for a girl rather than a gift for a boy.

"Don't make any wrong turn," the old man warned him as he started to open the door. "It's three turns to your right, then one to your left, then keep along the inner court wall, then take the big gate—they don't lock that till ten—then go to your left again, then across where it's dark, then keep along the outer wall till you get to the place where we were working when they stopped us, then climb."

"But if—" Mercer hesitated.

Philo paused. "I wish I could give you the ladder," he said, "but I've been making that for almost thirty years. I don't want to die here. I have to keep it to get out. But I wish—" He pondered in what seemed to Mercer a long time. "You got to go to Buddy," he said. "You can't take any chances, so I'll go along. I didn't mean to try tonight. I've had a feeling that I ought not to go just now. But you—" He swung open his door. "Let's go," he whispered.

Down corridor after corridor of the tier they slipped in the soft swiftness of wildcats. Eyes back of steel gratings must have seen them, but no sound gave warning of their passing. Twice they eluded guards by the fraction of an inch, it seemed. Once, pressed against a wall behind a door, they heard the stertorous breathing of the man who went by. As they sped, Mercer knew that he could not have found the way. Only the years of Philo's life in the prison could have taught a man the devious passages. He kept close to his guide as they came to the court-yard wall, hugging it till they made the swift plunge through the gate. Then down by the wall on the other side they clung till the darkest place gave them the chance to cross to the shadow of the outer wall. There, inch by inch, they groped toward the point where they had worked; for on the other side of the wall lay the sand pile.

A peal of thunder, louder than those which had come before it, tore down on them, and they crouched against the wall. A jagged streak of lightning ran down the sky. Then there rose a flare of white light, rushing upward like a tongue of flame. After it a red glow, lurid as a

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Most men and women treat their minds like merry-go-rounds. They read enough, goodness knows, but at the end of the year they have learned nothing, made no mental growth, arrived nowhere.

Said Hamilton Wright Mabie:

"Many people expend in desultory reading time and effort that, wisely directed, would make them masters of epochs and literatures. The art of reading is to read in such a way that with the utmost economy of time one can secure the richest results."

"Fair enough," you say, "but who is going to teach me this 'art of reading'? Among so many million books how can I know which are really worth while?"

It was in answer to this question that Dr. Charles W. Eliot, for forty years President of Harvard University, undertook the preparation of the most famous library in the world.

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flame of hell, spread over the world. "It's a fire," Mercer gasped. "They'll see us."

"It's the steel-mills," Philo said.

The red flare died down, and they crawled onward. Then another white gleam spurted forth, and another crimson tide of fire flamed over the world. In its light they could see the sentry walking the wall. Mercer's eyes measured the height. Could they make it in the moment the watching man might not be looking? What if lightning flashed as they clambered? What if the glare discovered them? His heart pounded suffocatingly. "Ready?" he asked Philo.

The old man had taken his ladder from its hiding-place around his waist. Once more he stopped, as if considering a problem. Then he flung up the ladder carefully, shrewdly, so that it caught in the spike he had embedded in the wall. "Nobody found it," he triumphed. He threw his weight on the support.. "It holds," he said. Then: "You go first."

"Why don't you?" Mercer knew it to be the better chance.

"Go on," Philo bade him.

On the ladder woven of the other man's infinite patience, he climbed the wall. Again the thunder roared above them. He had come to the last rung when he saw the tip of the white tongue thrust out upon the sky. In a moment— He came to the top, and lay flat, waiting the dying of the glare that spread over the world. Beneath him he could feel the ladder swaying as Philo essayed the climb. Would the sentry see them? "Easy," he called down to the old man. "Wait till it's dark again."

"I have to—now," Philo said. "Somebody's coming through the courtyard."

Slowly he rose as the red flare deepened. Across the prison yard the sentry halted. What had he seen? "Quick," Mercer commanded, crawling outward to give Philo room when he should reach the level of the top. He was hanging by his hands, lifting his head to watch the other man's progress, when Philo gained the summit of his climb. For an instant he lay on the wall as Mercer had done.

"Ready," said Mercer. The old man twisted his body. "Ready," he said. Then, across the silence of the reddened night, a shot rang out. Mercer dropped to the sand pile. "Come on," he called to Philo. "We've one chance in the world, and we'll take it!" But old Philo did not stir. He lay on top of the wall, moaning a little. "They got me, Tom," he said. "Maybe it aint much, but I can't move. No, don't come back. It'd be the two of us instead of one. Go—quick. Go to the little feller and wish him—for me—a happy birthday."

From somewhere within an answering shot echoed. A crash of thunder smashed through the smothering air. The red glare of the mills was dying down, but across the blackness of the storm-swept night a siren shrieked warning of escaping convicts as a man crouched in a sand pile by the prison wall, clutching to his heart a tawdry box of shells that an old man had made for a little boy.

The events of the next installment of this fine story are even more dramatic. Watch for it in our forthcoming March issue.

THEME WITH VARIATIONS

(Continued from page 40)

He turned it over in his hand.

"Well," he said, "if you want me to—"

"I left my mother terribly ill in New York," she broke in, suddenly and naïvely all words. "Up at St. Luke's! She's always been with me before. Always! But I have one more picture to do under this contract, and Mr. Salsberg wouldn't wait. He said they couldn't. They'd already begun it, you see, and the overhead is tremendous. He wired it would cost fourteen hundred dollars for every day I delayed; so I brought Susan—she's our maid, Mother's and mine; she brought me up, really—and came right along. It was terribly hard to know what to do. And then another trouble came up. Really, if it hadn't been for Mother, I'd have been glad to get away. I was frightened."

She was talking blindly to delay reading the message. As if touched suddenly by self-consciousness, she reached hesitatingly out for it. It occurred to him then that he doubtless seemed old to her. She was in effect adopting him as an uncle. Before he could give it to her, however, she pillowed her head on an arm over the railing and softly, wretchedly, cried.

HE stood now in complete confusion, blankly holding out the yellow envelope—held it out, indeed, until she contrived to frame the words, not lifting her head:

"Please read it to me."

He tossed the crumpled envelope over the railing, where it followed for a moment before the wind whirled it away, then unfolded the paper.

"'I cannot endure your indifference,'" he heard himself reading. "'Have arranged to follow you on second section and will transfer to your section at first stop possible. Please arrange with conductor—'"

He became aware that she had lifted that dainty little head and was staring up at him.

"Oh—that!" she cried softly, frowning. "How awful!"

"Perhaps you—"

"Go on, please!"

"'Please arrange with conductor for chair in smoker if no other accomodation (stop) we must settle this thing once and for all I cannot go on without you (stop) much better for us both to end everything than continue this dreadful unhappiness and misunderstanding you know I love you more than all the world and cannot give you up now (stop) let me take you out of that awful business and make a home with you or—'"

"That's all," he said gently. "Just that *'or.'*"

She was pressing her hands tightly against her cheeks and temples.

"If I could only think clearly," she broke out. "Everything seems to be driv-

Are You Ever Tongue-Tied At a Party?

HAVE you ever been seated next to a man, or a woman, at a dinner and discovered that there wasn't a thing in the world you could talk about?

Have you ever been tongue-tied at a party—actually tongue-tied, you know, and unable to say what you wanted to say, hesitant and embarrassed instead of well-poised and at ease?

It is humiliating to sit next to a young lady, or a young man, at a dinner table and not be able to converse in a calm well-bred manner. It is awkward to leave one's dance partner without a word—or to murmur some senseless phrase that you regret the moment it leaves your lips.

Embarrassment robs so many of us of our power of speech. Frequently people who are quite brilliant talkers among their own friends find that they cannot utter a word when they are among strangers.

At a party, do you know how to make and acknowledge introductions in a pleasing, well-poised manner? Do you know how to mingle with the guests, saying the right thing at the right time? Do you know what to say to your hostess when you arrive, and what to say when you depart?

Does conversation lag every time it reaches you? Are you constrained and ill at ease throughout the evening?

The difference between being a calm, well-poised guest and an embarrassed, constrained guest is usually the difference between a happy and a miserable evening.

Are You Ever "Alone" in a Crowd?

THE man who does not know exactly what is expected of him at a party or a dance, who does not know how to mingle with the guests and exactly what to do and say under all circumstances, feels alone, out of place. Often he feels uncomfortable. He imagines people are noticing him, thinking how dull he is, how uninteresting.

The woman who does not have a pleasing, engaging manner invariably has the "panicky" feeling of a wallflower. She is afraid of making blunders, afraid of saying the wrong thing, constrained and embarrassed when she should be entirely at ease.

Good manners make good mixers. If you do not want to be tongue-tied at a party, if you do not want to feel "alone" in a crowd, make it your business to know exactly what to do, say, write and wear on every occasion. The man or woman who is able to do the correct and cultured thing without stopping to think about it is the man or woman who is always welcome, always popular, always happy and at ease.

The Easiest Art to Master

Music, painting, writing—most arts require long study and constant application. Etiquette, which is one of the most useful arts in daily life can be mastered in almost one evening.

Do you know when to use the fork and when your fingers, when to rise upon being introduced and when to remain seated, when to acknowledge an introduction and when not to, when to wear full dress and when to wear informal clothes?

Etiquette tells you everything you want to know about what is worn and what is done in good society. It reveals all the many important little secrets that every well-bred man and woman knows.

By telling you what to say and when to say it, by explaining exactly what to do under all circumstances, by making clear every little point of conduct, etiquette gives you a wonderful poise and ease of manner. Instead of being tongue-tied, it shows you how to be a pleasing, interesting conversationalist. Instead of being "alone" it teaches you the secrets of making people like you and seek your company.

Mistakes That Condemn Us As Ill-Bred

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ing at me at once. It's a Chicago boy, Ned Hedding. I was engaged to him last fall. He pestered me so. I didn't know what I was doing. I was only eighteen. And then I found out about his trouble. His father and mother are dead. They left him a good deal of money, and he seemed nice, but he drinks too much or something—I don't know what it is; he gets violent, almost crazy. One evening it was awful—I thought he was going to kill me. And then I found that his aunt had tried once to have him shut up somewhere. I suppose there are a lot of places where the second section might catch up with us."

"I don't think so," he mused, drawing a chair to her side. ("That's right," said she rather timidly. "Do sit down, Mr. Yule.") "They might turn up at Kansas City in the morning. If they don't, we'll probably keep ahead until we reach Albuquerque. We stop twenty minutes there, you know. As I understand it, you don't want to see this man."

"Oh, I can't! It would be awful—especially if he's excited like this. I don't know what—he—would—do." This in a breathy thread of a voice. "He might really kill me. Why, even last fall, going out to restaurants and around, he carried a revolver. I found it out by accident—brushed against it, and asked him what it was. He took it out. I didn't like the way he handled it and looked at it. Made me awfully nervous. He pretended to joke, and said it might come in handy, that one way or the other we could fix it to be always together."

YULE deliberately filled and lighted his pipe. His pulse was quickening, though he couldn't at the first moment think precisely why. His mind had hadn't for months been actively engaged. But the succeeding moments brought out the somewhat exhilarating fact that it was engaged now. Certainly this dramatic little situation meant something to him, if only something to do.

Though it seemed unreal! He had to glance covertly at the shadowy sad little face beside him, to overcome an almost perverse impulse to cheer her up by laughing it away. It was necessary to dwell, with deliberate thought, on the difficulties life presents to very young people in these disorderly days of jazz and vile liquor and nearly universal emotional excess. The conditions were breeding inevitably a crop of paranoiacs. And murder, like robbery, was threatening to become a grim commonplace, ever since the war. All the alarming, insistent force of suggestion by example pressed at their elbows.

A witty Englishman had said that books do not copy life; life copies books. The reformers held that life, nowadays, copies motion pictures. Many of the screen dramas and nearly all the serials had until lately presented daily, broadcast, in literal vivid detail, every imaginable crime of violence. They were cleaning all that up; but the reformers perhaps had a point there. Those wild young brains might have been stirred unhappily. The young Mr. Hedding might go through with it—might, crazily, live a picture.

He handed her the telegram.

"I don't quite see how he got an oper-

ator to send this." The steadiness in his voice touched her more deeply than the kindness. "It's a pretty serious threat, of course." How little she was! "But if you'll let me help you—"

He thought she tried to speak. Certainly she inclined her head.

"—I'll tell you what we'll do. I'll find the Pullman conductor. This chap will have to go to him first, if he does catch up with us, and I think we'd better confide in him. I'll make it my business to see that the boy doesn't get to you, whatever happens. Try to tell me what he looks like."

"Why—he's rather tall, with very dark hair and brown eyes—smooth face—he's been putting on a little weight lately. But I can't let you—you mustn't do anything that—"

"I will see that he doesn't get to you, Miss Drew. I could hardly do less than that."

"But he might—if he was that way—he would shoot. It would be terrible."

"I wonder if I can make you understand my present state of mind. You're very young. I'm twelve years older, and that's a lot at this time of life. I've been going through a pounding that has left me very little interest in living. My wife loved another man. I had to let her have her divorce. And at the last I had to give her the boy too. It worked out that way. It's a familiar-enough story, nowadays. No good going into it. The thing that I want to make you understand, if I can, is that my life is a wreck. Oh, I'm not poor, but—suppose I put it this way: I don't care what happens to me. I don't. I've nothing to lose. It's a relief to have something—to be active in any way—"

He was bungling it unconscionably. But what stopped him wasn't that,—he hardly cared about that,—but the abrupt realization that no philandering lover could have placed himself in a more alluring light in the eyes of a romantic girl. Yes, he caught that. Those swarthy men in the caps would have catalogued him, not without vulgar admiration, as a fast worker. The thought stung him. He saw her sensitively pretty lips framing the words, "How wonderful!" He thought those were the words. What this child needed was not romantic posturings, but kindness. Just kindness!

"The real point," he went on, almost as clumsily, "is that it's absurd to think about danger. That crazy boy needs a little sensible handling. I'll only ask you to stay in your compartment in the morning, until we pull out of Kansas City. And don't show yourself at the window. And now"—he rose and stood over her—"I'm going to send you to bed. That's the place for you."

SLOWLY she got up. She didn't quite reach to his shoulder. And she wouldn't weigh a hundred pounds. He saw that she was quietly crying, nerves all unstrung.

"I don't know what to say to you—"

She couldn't get on with that, could only lean there against the woodwork.

Gently he took her arm and moved her toward the screen door. He could have lifted her clear of the platform with the one hand.

But impulsively she reached up her

slender arms, with a little sob, and clung for a moment about his neck, on her tiptoes, crying on his coat. He found himself clumsily patting her shoulder and murmuring something that sounded (when, later, over and over, he tried to piece together a wildly scattered memory of the scene) painfully like—"There, there! There, there! It'll be all right!"

Then she vanished. And he stood holding the rail in an iron grip, laughing softly and absurdly.

And then, by way of coming part way back to his senses, he told himself that the embrace meant no more to this little actress than a warm clasp of the hand to a restrained suburbanite. She was moved, yes. And grateful! It was a wonder she hadn't kissed him. She kissed men any day in her work, men who were nothing to her. Of course!

THE second section was delayed in Missouri and failed to overtake the first at Kansas City. Little Miss Drew was relieved, and at luncheon chattered girlishly with Yule. They met in the corridor, and she came along almost childishly with him as a matter of course. He left her at the door of the dining-car and spent the afternoon, savagely smoking in the club-car up ahead.

And he went in late for dinner. He hadn't liked the way those beady-eyed men studied him at noon. He wouldn't have them discussing him, or her. And his confusion—that high pulse—was disturbing, even irritating. He told himself that there was no good in being a damn' fool.

From his berth in the morning he watched the flat rays of the sun touch and warm the mountains of New Mexico. The train climbed alkali wastes and twisted slowly through rocky passes and past hillsides that were dotted and patched with gray-green chaparral.

He had not before traveled in the West. The dark laborers along the right of way must be Mexicans. Interesting! He caught a glimpse, later, of an Indian pueblo, yellow-gray like the desert.

He ordered breakfast brought in—hid there in his compartment, fighting unreality. He was, it seemed, a Galahad, championing fair damsels in distress. He laughed.

An unfamiliar light sound rose above the now familiar noises of the train. It almost seemed a tapping. It was a tapping.

He sprang up and opened the door. There she stood, Marjorie Drew—a pale child now, and confused. She stepped within; and almost defensively he hooked back the door. Certainly he couldn't close it. And he couldn't hit on the phrases that would tell her she mustn't come to his room like this.

She held forth a number of those yellow envelopes.

"I wondered if you'd mind," she faltered, with a naïveté that was real. "I've tried for hours to open them. I don't want Susan to see them. And there's no one else. . . . . I—"

"Do sit down," said he, rather distantly courteous. He knew he was fighting her. In a way it seemed too bad; but what else could he do? It was his loneliness, of course, and her beguiling charm. He was primitive man enough, and honest

about it. Work had been the clean corrective force in his life—work and a devotion that had thrilled him every day until near the last. But the work had had to go, along with the heartbreaking memories of that devotion. The shock, the dirt of that divorce, the brain-burning columns in the newspapers, h ! left him, it appeared, emotionally exposed—lonely, curiously helpless in the presence of vital things, and queerly heart-hungry, though he hadn't yet admitted that hunger.

He had clung savagely to that idea of solitude—the mountains, the se.., something. Even now, as he dropped, a courteous, grave young man, into the seat opposite the girl that a wide world loved, or fancied it loved (men everywhere sitting in dark theaters picturing themselves in the vapid person of her screen lover), he considered coming back from the Coast to this spacious desert country. Take a horse, a gun and a guide, and ride straight out into the unknown—ride on and on—tan his skin to leather, harden his soft city muscles, sleep in his clothes, let his beard grow and his socks cling to his feet, and the keen winds of the untamed lands blow the hate and the hurt out of his bewildered soul.

"You wish me to read them?" he asked.

"If you would. I—I couldn't sleep. .....I get so frightened."

Her mother was no worse. That brightened the girl for a moment.

Salsberg sent greetings and would meet her at the train with her own car. He had had it repainted, as a friendly attention. Felt sure she wouldn't mind.

SHE drooped at this. She disliked Salsberg. "He keeps me in these sensational pictures," she explained wanly. "I want to do something interesting. Oh, how I'd love to do 'Peter Pan!' Did you ever see it, the play? Maude Adams?" And she seemed surprised that he had. "I don't think I'll stay with him after this next picture. Mother doesn't understand my feeling this way. She's got that idea of making more and more money. As if I didn't have money enough!" He listened, sensitively incredulous. She was nineteen, and she'd made money enough! A topsy-turvy world! Hollywood..... She finished—the tears had come again, and she was eying the unopened envelope—with this: "Salsberg and Mother both say I haven't any sense of showmanship."

"Thank God!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Nothing!" He tore open that envelope. After reading the message, he deliberately folded it and put it into his pocket. Her eyes, like a dog's, followed the movement.

"Is it—bad?" she asked.

"Yes—rather bad."

"He's getting more excited."

Yule nodded. "I'm going to tell you—they've caught up. The conductor told me. Not ten minutes behind us. We'll be in Albuquerque soon,"—he glanced at his watch,—"very soon. Come! I want you to go back to your own compartment, lock the door, pull the curtains down. Everything will be all right."

"Couldn't I just sit here?"

"No."

"Oh, he might think—"

"No. You mustn't be here." She had wilted. He had to help her up, trusting

with set teeth that she wouldn't cling to him again. It seemed almost caddish that he couldn't take that as casually as she. But he couldn't—and anyway, she didn't. He walked with her to her door in the car ahead, and waited with a friendly manufactured smile till the lock clicked.

CROUCHING on the floor between the seats, she peered out under the blind, while the elderly perturbed woman named Susan sat in puzzlement looking on.

The golden desert sunlight glowed vibrantly in the crystalline atmosphere and crisply warmed the platforms and cement walks and the stucco station of a pleasantly Spanish appearance. The Indians sat in their double line, surrounded by their pottery and baskets.

The train had stopped now. Eager, leg-cramped passengers streamed across the platform and chaffered with the Indians. She saw the Pullman conductor taking up a position over near those brightly pictorial Indians and turning to face the train with feet planted solidly, strongly; then she saw Mr. Yule strolling over and standing with dignity by his side. She felt faint, and slightly ill. She turned and stared at the closed door.

Minutes passed, interminable, breathless, aching minutes mocking the red-amber sun and the chattering passengers.

A locomotive whistled. Involuntarily, sharply, she drew in her breath. Another minute somehow passed. A bell rang, faintly at first, then loudly and more loudly, until a locomotive roared by on the farther side, came to a stop. Now—

They were appearing—the passengers from the second section—walking around the end of the first, and climbing across the vestibules. Men in outing clothes and straw hats, smoking cigars and cigarettes; women in filmy summer things; pretty girls in silk sweaters as gay in tone as the Navajo blankets. She saw friends greeting one another. This in quick, nervous glances; she couldn't for long remove her gaze from that Pullman conductor and the quiet tall man beside him.

Then her finger-tips dug into her palms. A younger man—tall and dark—was hurrying along the platform, carrying a handbag and looking sharply about. A porter followed with suitcases and a bag of golf-clubs. Golf-clubs! That was erratically like him.

He found the Pullman conductor and talked with excited gestures—talked incoherently, she knew, saying the wrong things first, the words tumbling jerkily from his lips. She knew in imagination how every syllable sounded.

The Pullman conductor shook his head—said something quietly—listened, and then shook his head again. Ned was arguing. He would. He turned abruptly, however, called to the porter—she heard his voice now through the window, and shivered in uncontrollable nervous responsiveness. He was coming resolutely toward the train, staring actually at her window; and she wondered in the cold fatalism of youth if he could see her eyes in the narrow space between curtain and sill. She thought not, but in any event couldn't dodge away.

The Pullman conductor hurried after him, intercepted him firmly. Ned's voice rose angrily. So well she knew the sound!

Strolling passengers paused in their talk to turn and curiously look.

Ned was trying to push the conductor aside. He would do that, too. He would fight his way through. A brakeman moved toward them. And finally Mr. Yule came squarely in front of Ned, looking him firmly up and down and speaking sharply. She saw the indignant question in Ned's eyes as he turned on this new party to the argument, and saw him back off a step and stare, and heard him shout angrily: "Just who in hell are you?"

It was then that she sprang up, unlocked the door, tore her arm away from the protesting Susan, and dashed along the corridor.

Mr. Yule had said something. Ned was still backing away, eying him. Suddenly he cried:

"So it's you that's protecting her now! Protecting her! Of course! That'll be it!" And he drew his revolver, very quickly.

The men about seemed to hesitate. He fired, once. Then—she was hesitating on the steps—she saw Yule walking straight up to him, and heard him say, in measured words:

"Miss Drew has promised to be my wife."

Ned faltered. She could see that. Then very suddenly there was a struggle. Those other men came to life, after Yule set them an example. The conductor seemed to have the revolver. She thought he passed it to Mr. Yule. Women were screaming, and there was a sound of rushing feet.

"What shall we do with him?" This was the station master.

"Have your police lock him up for a day. Then, if he'll go straight back to Chicago, put him on the train. Tell him I wont bring charges if he'll quit his nonsense—let Miss Drew alone."

"He must have winged you," observed the Pullman conductor, eying a red stain on his sleeve. "Better take off your coat."

Yule took it off. Then he saw the little inert figure in a heap on the platform just behind him. He stooped and gathered her up, with an abrupt, "Bring my coat, please!" to the Pullman conductor, and swiftly carried her to her compartment, which a maid finally unlocked to him.

A dash of water brought a fluttering tinge of color. The pretty eyes opened. She shuddered unhappily, then recognized the grave face bending over hers, and instantly, with a little cry, raised weak arms and drew his face to hers, kissed him.

He patted her cheek, then gently withdrew to the door. "I'll look in later to see how you're feeling," he said.

"But wait—you're hurt—he shot you!"

"Just grazed the skin. I'll have it attended to." He was shamefaced about this. And he hurried away.

THE train rolled on toward Arizona. A physician passenger was binding the arm—this in his own compartment—when she tapped and then slipped within. In a moment again, her arms were about him, and her tears were wet upon his cheek as she murmured:

"You didn't think I'd let anyone else take care of you?"

The physician might have been the mummy of Rameses First, for all she knew or cared. She was all impulses and frank expressiveness.

Firmly—in his confused state near to laughing out—he lifted her by the shoulders and set her down in the opposite seat.

"You just sit there, little girl," he said. "I've got to try to think. We're neither of us altogether sane at the moment. First, anyway, I've got to explain something. I told that boy you were going to marry me."

"I heard that."

"Oh! Well, it may not have been the best judgment, but I had to startle him before he could shoot again." Her sensitively mobile face hung on his words and moved expressively with them. And he was explaining—explaining—stupidly, like a man. "It gave us a chance to get the pistol, you see."

In that abruptly impulsive way of hers, she bounced over beside him and again was petting him.

He held her away. "See here, Marjorie,—I can hardly call you Miss Drew, —I'm old and battered and tired. I don't know whether I can ever again feel the great thrill of love—young love; but it begins to look as if I couldn't go on alone. I've lost my boy. I've got to take care of somebody. I've *got* to! And if anybody ever needed taking care of, it's you, now. Will you marry me?"

Her big eyes looked straight into his.

"Let me pitch in and work with you. Perhaps I could help you. And, oh God, how you could help me! Help me build a new life, beginning now. You see—"

Doubtless he would have gone right on explaining had not her pretty lips stopped his.

THE train had left the Mohave Desert behind and plunged into the mountains for the tortuous downhill run into the San Bernardino Valley. David Deane opened his door, gathered the heap of continuity script from the table and packed it. During this operation he felt a presence in the doorway.

Adrian Yule stood there. They hadn't talked again. He himself had been too deep in work to think of it. He had to begin shooting a picture at nine in the morning on the Hollywood lot. He had cast it by telegraph. Already the "overhead" of his nightmare dreams was mounting against him.

Mr. Yule wore a genial grin—which was slightly odd. On that first night he had seemed gloomy.

"How are you? Come in!"

"Been a pleasant trip. I suppose we'll be down among the oranges soon."

"Yes—soon. See here, I do wish you'd make that visit to Hollywood. I meant that. I don't mind telling you that I'm going to see if I can't interest you in pictures. You're the sort we need—men who can look past all this experimental confusion and see where we're headed. Surely you could stop over a few days."

"Well, why, yes. Yes, I'll be around awhile."

"Oh, you've changed your plans."

"Why—yes, somewhat. Yes, I've changed them. The fact is, I'm going into pictures."

"Fine! You've caught the atmosphere already!"

"Yes."

"That's quicker than some. Still, everybody comes. I wouldn't have given you more than three days in Hollywood. By the way, what was that row back at Albuquerque? I've meant to ask. I was working in here. Thought I heard a shot. And some one in the dining-car connected your name with it."

"Why—it was a boy on the second section. He was pursuing Miss Drew. He did fire a shot, but they got the pistol away and shipped him back East."

"Hit anybody?"

"Well—yes. Me."

"You? Good Lord!"

"Didn't amount to a thing. Look here, you were so kind the other night as to say you'd like to try a little work with me some day."

"I have no intention of letting you get away, Mr. Yule."

"And also I understood you to say that you'd like to work with Miss Drew."

"It's one of my dreams. That girl has a soul."

"Well—it has occurred to me that the three of us might draw together in some sort of common interest."

"You know her?"

"Why—yes. Well, that is, we've met here on the train."

"That's so? Well, this *is* fine! But how about her contract with Salsberg?"

"Only one more picture. She's going to be married."

"Married? Good God! When?"

"Today."

"To whom?"

"Well—to me."

The lean face was inscrutable. Yule found himself on the verge of grinning uncontrollably, even blushing, but somehow controlled himself.

A field of round little trees laden with clustered spheres of golden fruit was sliding by outside. Deane raised the window and sniffed.

"Orange blossoms!" he remarked dryly.

Yule laughed aloud.

Deane drew out a cigar-case. They lighted from the one match, and puffed.

"Thanks," said Yule two minutes later.

Three minutes after that, he added:

"I must go look after Marjorie."

Deane got up and extended a friendly hand.

"I think I told you that things happen awfully fast in the pictures," he said. "No way of keeping up with 'em. Not, however,"—a bony hand arrested Yule in whatever he was about to say,—"not that you haven't made a remarkable beginning, for an outsider!"

THE LAUGHING WOMAN

(*Continued from page 59*)

internally with panic. He knew the thing that had happened. These illusions pressing for reality had finally won a way through to forms and voices. The thing that had happened to the saints was, by some briefly recovered vigor of evil, about to happen to him!

The hot air of the autumn night lay on the river like the fume of a distillation.

He knew from whence the laughter rose, and wherefore it was multiplied. It was the illusion, manifold, confused and varied, of the girl in the church, of the girl on the top of the gilded wagon; and that golden silent laughter had got now the lure of voices.

They laughed, these divine illusions; and beyond in the bend of the river they awaited him.

He would drive the boat across, with great strokes, and escape this sorcery. Perhaps they had not yet won a way into the forms of life. Disembodied voices—perhaps the thing was that!

It was not that!

His mighty thrust drove the little boat out into the open river. And the amazed man, releasing the oars in the locks, put up his arm across his face like one who would ward off a blow.

The whole sweep of the silver river flashed with the white bodies of Nereides; they were everywhere, extending through the blue moon-haze to the rocks of the shore beyond. The boat under the impetus of the powerful oar-strokes had glided almost noiselessly into the very nest of them. For a moment, as though disconcerted by this thing of a fixed reality, they cried out and withdrew, but almost immediately they returned, and a great burst of laughter rippled like a wave over the silver surface of the river.

The man sat motionless, his arm in the defensive posture across his face. And the naked creatures, with their golden laughter, swarmed down upon him. A babble confused and extending itself in every direction, rose—cries, voices, words that the amazed man was too shaken to distinguish.

They enveloped him, these siren creatures. They seized the boat, convoyed it. It went on without the stroke of an oar. The reality of these white bodies, panting in this golden babble of sound, in this immense sweep of silver water, was beyond any conception of the human fancy. He was mad, the man stammered in his heart—or it was real.

And reality it could not be!

When could the whole water of a river be peopled with Nereides, save out of the womb of the mind?

The boat continued to advance. A hand, cool, dripping with water, touched his arm, moved along it as though it fingered upward from the throbbing peak of his heart and drew him down to the gunwale of the boat. And his eyes, released from the shield of his arm, saw a head weighted with dark hair, wet and massed like the heavy foliage of a vine, about a face that laughed.

With an immense effort the man rose, balanced himself an instant on the unsteady seat and sprang far out into the water. The moving boat had very nearly reached the opposite shore, and the long leap carried the man into the shallows. He plunged forward, gained the cover of the wood and escaped, the burst of golden laughter following him like the mingling notes of a siren chorus.

But the security which the man expected in his house did not await him.

HE seemed to arrive, awakened, in a place which he had hitherto inhabited in a sort of somnambulism. The severity of the ancient monastic order was, in a measure, maintained in this house which he occupied, situated on the grounds adjoining the summer residence of the Embassy—the wooden table, the bench, the shelf for the sacred texts. But the spiritual essence of these things had changed; the place was desolate!

He sat down on the bench before the table. And Nature, the great enchantress, the divine guardian of life, had her mighty will with him. From the tension that had peopled the night with Nereides he felt that he had escaped. But he had, in fact, escaped from nothing. It was, only, that the Enchantress turned him a little in her drugged hands.

And a sense of loss, complete and utter, like the darkness of the pit, descended on him. The one thing, he now desperately saw it, the one only thing for which he was born and suckled, and for which he ate bread and became a man—a thing hidden until now—had on this day stepped out into the light and beckoned.

And if he failed it, the reason for his being here was ended, all the care, the patience, the endless labors of Nature, bringing him in strength to the fullness of his life, were barren; all the agony that he had given to his mother, the milk that he had drunk, the fruits of the earth that he had eaten, were wasted; he would be a thing of no account, useless to the great plan, to be broken up by the eternal forces in disgust.

And slowly, a little farther, in her drugged hands the Enchantress turned him.

And it seemed to him that his fathers sleeping in the earth approached and condemned him. The gift of life handed down to him must be passed on. To this life-line the dead clung; they reached to immortality with it. Did he break it, they would be, all, adrift to the farthest ancestor—flung off to be derelict forever in the wash of some outer darkness! They crowded around him in their awful anxiety!

And yet a little farther under the hands steeped in Lotus!

Why should the ecstasy of life be denied him?

"Joy cometh in the morning," it is written.

At any rate, the will to joy came. He would return into the world and claim what Nature had shown him.

THE sun gilding the hilltops found him on the way. And as though the will drew what the heart longed for, it appeared. At a turn of the road in a cool deep of the wood, he came, with the abruptness of a vision, upon the girl and the man who had been before him yester-

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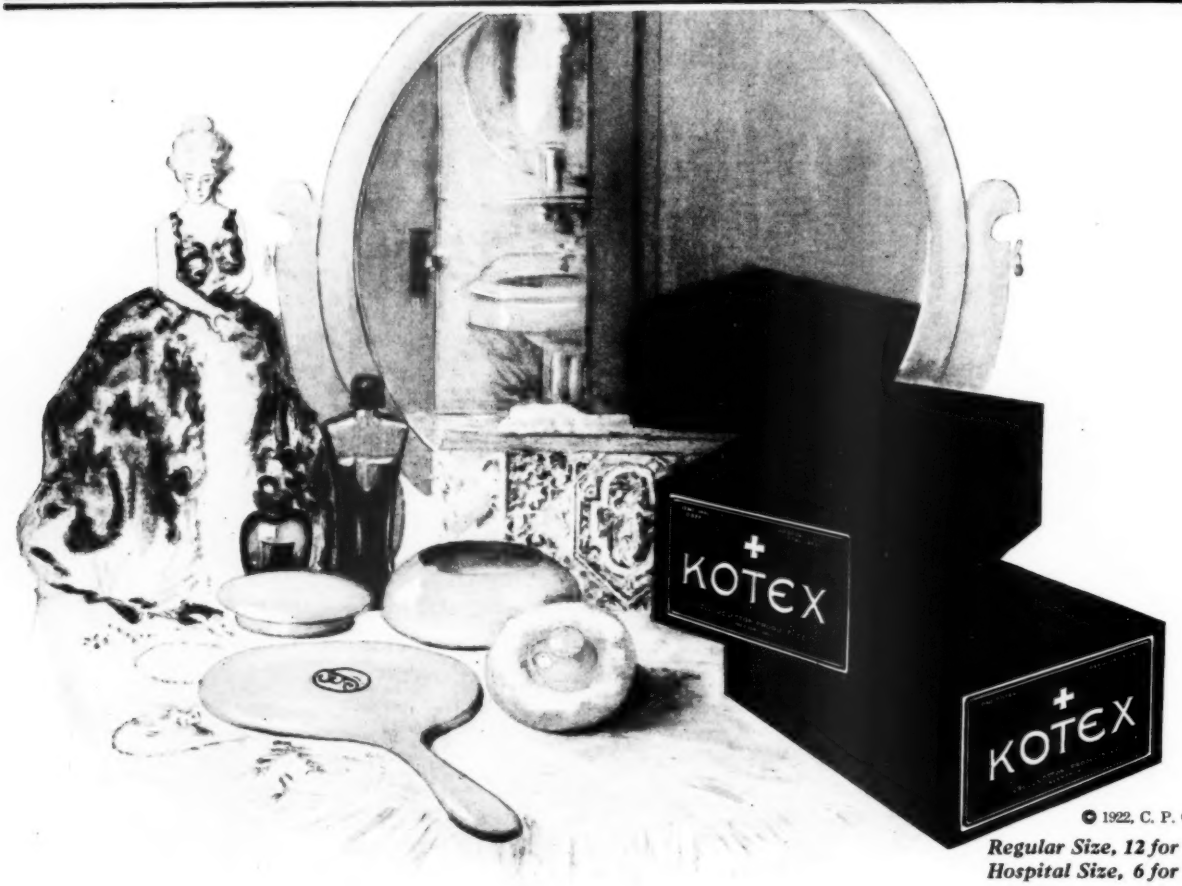

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day in the church. They rode in the early morning—smart, elegant, distinguished, the horses traveling almost without a sound in the dust.

And the lure of this heavenly creature, in the dress of a boy, was even more divinely visioned: the black boots with the silver spurs, the white breeches, the shirt confined at the waist with the broad webbed belt, and the cool, beautiful, distinguished face under the polo-helmet with its chin-strap. Lovely, beyond anything that the mind could imagine, was the exquisite body of this girl.

They passed him.

The girl did not even look, but for an instant the man regarded him. And it was this glance that extinguished the hope within him. It put him immeasurably down. And he saw clearly, what he had not yesterday considered, the strength and the iron vigor of this man, the determined will, to be stopped by nothing. To take from this man what he possessed, one must pry open his dead clinched fingers.

There were men in the world, then, ruthless and determined, whose resistance he had not considered. This granite fact, with which the bubbles of his fancy must inevitably collide, he had wholly failed to realize. One passed him with the thing he wished, and he could not meet, even, the cold sweep of his eye!

Trampled under, beaten down and perplexed, the youth went on.

He had been a fool. He reflected.

This girl of wealth, of distinction, was of course inaccessibly beyond him. But the other was not. She was the nomad of a gypsy caravan, and he could win his way to her.

He went on, his heart climbing again.

This other he would search out and possess. She awaited him; he had only to find her; that golden laugh descending on him like the sun had disclosed her heart. He had been blinded and for a moment a fool! She, this other, had been the prepotent influence. She, Nature's mysterious agencies, laboring to the purpose of her plan, had selected for him. She had dominated his imaginings, peopled the silver river, in his fancy, with a horde of white bodies tumbling in the mood of a golden laugh.....He went on.

IT was midmorning when he reached the town. Crowds of people blocked the way. Determined with his great purpose, he shouldered through.

The one long street was the theater of a barbaric pageant. Elephants, spangled riders, caparisoned horses and immense bands of music advanced. And there followed, reproduced here an inconceivable age after its reality, the visit of an Oriental beauty, in every gorgeous extravagance, to the court of that exquisite voluptuary who had immortalized, in his Song, the charms of women.

The man, winning his way through to the curb, remained a moment uncertain. The vast splendor of the pageant confused him.

On an immense float covered with a cloth of gold lay a woman fanned by two half-naked Numidian girls, under a great canopy of striped silk supported on gilded standards. And beside the float a nimble creature dressed in a riot of color and covered with bangles of brass, leaped in the abandon of a wild dance. There followed hordes of women, in every spectacular costume that a crude fancy, endeavoring to reproduce the visit of the Queen of Sheba, could imagine.

Then the fans, immense, downy and soft, moving as in rhythm above the Oriental beauty, for a moment revealed her.

And the man on the curb,—this Buddhist novitiate in the clerical dress of the Church of England, this youth,—straining forward on his toes, sprang into the street, crossed in a stride and leaped onto the float. He seized the girl's wrist in his hand and began to pour out all the confused longings of his heart—a tumbling, passionate torrent of words.

For a moment the girl, whom he had first seen on the gilded wagon-top, was startled. Then she half rose and turned toward the gorgeous dancing woman beside the float, her face radiant with that beautiful noiseless laugh:

"Hey, Mabel!" she called, her voice crude and strident. "The pulpit Johnny that we *si*-reened last night, in the big wash, wants to wed me. Can you beat it!"

AND before the man—flung back, bruised, numb, as by the battering of a wave—there appeared in fancy a vast, immobile image of Buddha, over beyond this pageant: serene in an eternal calm, as though abominably indifferent to the soul of man, bewildered by emotions and drugging itself with dreams.

THE BLACK FISHERMAN

(*Continued from page 71*)

of an overhanging rosebush, and peered down upon the novel scene. What a lot of nests! What a tempting array of plump younglings! His lean jaws slavered with greed.

The fox knew nothing about cormorants. But he could see that the black, fine-plumaged guardians of the nests were very hefty, self-confident birds, with bold, fierce eyes and extraordinarily efficient-looking beaks. He speedily came to the conclusion that the immediate vicinity of those beaks would be bad for his health. Decidedly those grapes were sour. Being a sagacious beast and not given to wasting effort on the unattainable, he was just about to curb his appetite and turn away, when his glance fell upon the Black Fisherman's nest, lying far apart and solitary. To be sure, both parent birds were beside the nest at the moment. But they were only two; and after all, they were only birds. This looked more promising. He crept nearer, and waited, it being his wise custom to look before he leaped.

Both parents were busy feeding the gaping mouths of their young, and the fox watched with interest the unusual process. It seemed to him absurd and unnecessary; and his respect for the great black birds began to diminish. Presently the larger of the two, the Black Fisherman himself, having disgorged all the food he could spare, plunged downward from the ledge and disappeared.

This was the red watcher's opportunity. With a rushing leap down the steep slope, he sprang upon the nest. Never dreaming that the one lone guardian would dare to face him, and craving the tender flesh of the young rather than the tough adult, he made the mistake of ignoring the mother bird. He seized one of the nestlings and crushed the life out of it in a single snap of his jaws. But at the same instant the stab of a steel-hard mandible struck him full in one eye, simply obliterating it, and a mighty buffeting of wings forced him off the nest.

With a yelp of rage and anguish, the fox turned upon his assailant and seized her by one wing, high up and close to the body. As his fangs ground through the bone, the dauntless mother raked his flank with her stabbing beak and threw herself backward, frantically struggling, toward the lip of the ledge. Her instinctive purpose was twofold, first to drag the fox from the precious nest, second to seek escape from this land enemy in either the air or the water, where she would be more at home. The fox, his one remaining eye for the moment veiled by his opponent's feathers, could not see his peril, but resisted instinctively whatever she seemed trying to do.

FROM the first moment of the battle the mother bird had sent out her harsh cries for help. And now, while the unequal combat went on at the very brink of the abyss, the Black Fisherman arrived. With a mighty shock he landed on the fox's back, striking and stabbing madly. Bewildered, and half stunned, the fox jerked up his head to seize his new antagonist; but met by a demoralizing thrust fair on the snout, he missed his aim and caught the throat of the mother bird instead. The next instant, in a mad confusion of pounding wings and yelpings and black feathers and red fur, the three went over the brink together.

Immediately the Black Fisherman, who was unhurt, flew clear. He could do nothing but follow the other two downward as they fell rolling over each other in the death-grip. Halfway down, they crashed upon a jutting point of rock, and fell apart as they bounced off. With two tremendous splashes they struck the water. The body of the fox sank from sight, whirled away by an undercurrent and probably caught in some deep crevice, there to be devoured by the crabs and other sea-scavengers. The dead cormorant, supported by her feathers and her hollow bones, lay floating belly upward, with sprawled wings, on the surface. Her mate, alighting beside her, swam around her several times, eying her with an intense gaze. Then, realizing that she was dead, he slowly swam away to take up the double duties now thrust upon him. After all, as there were now but two mouths left in the nest to feed, there was no doubt but that he would be equal to the task.

LOW
(Continued

has some hand in the theft and is seeking to protect himself in this clumsy manner."

While he was speaking, Fawcett sweated. The pulses at his temples throbbed. He would have strangled that sullen, image-faced clod, with the utmost pleasure. How he was to get out of the mess which this—this bovine creature had precipitated, he had no conception. But he was going into it fighting.

FAWCETT wanted to groan. Instead he drove another nail into Zeke.

"It couldn't have been this dullard who actually took the pages, Mr. Hemptonning. He couldn't select the most valuable books. Ask him what part he had. He probably had nothing more to do than stand watch —or show the way. Does he know the inside of the house?"

"I—I don't know." Old Joshua was excited by Fawcett's reasoning. He raised a shaking finger and echoed the accusation almost before Zeke realized that he was being made the target of suspicion. "If you know anything of this, Zeke,"—he meant to be severe but his voice was squeaky,—"you must tell me, or—or I'll have you arrested!"

Fawcett nodded approvingly, though there was nothing of malice on his face. He seemed regretful over the pass into which Zeke had projected himself.

"Tell us where the stolen pages are," he said gently, "and Mr. Hemptonning, I'm sure, will be lenient with you."

Zeke gaped. Arrested! He understood that word.

"I don't know nothing," he stated without feeling, "'cept that he was out this mornin' and the tree knocked his cap off'm his head." Slyness crept over his dull face; he was animated by a very obvious idea: "Will you walk under the tree?"

Fawcett's heart thump-thumped. This was the dangerous corner. Yet it could not be detoured. He could not reject the challenge. He had to bluff his way through.

"I'll do that—certainly." George Harold again managed to speak jauntily. His motioning hands proclaimed the absurdity of the proceeding. "You say I had on a cap?" he inquired of Zeke. "Just a minute, till I run upstairs and get one."

Joshua Hemptonning frowned upon Zeke as Fawcett left. He asked a question which was welcomed by Fawcett, who listened outside the door.

"How far were you from this man you saw?"

"The other side of the meadow," answered Zeke.

"How can you be sure it was Mr. Fawcett when you were so far away—two hundred yards away, and you say it was barely daylight?"

"It was him—I seen him," reiterated Zeke.

Fawcett didn't wait to hear more. He had had just a trace of fear that the old man was being swayed by the yokel Zeke.

When Fawcett returned, Joshua was

BRIDGE

from page 76)

looking out the window, his back to Zeke. He was thinking how stupid the man was to persist in this virtual accusation of a most estimable young man. Zeke stood uncomfortably in the middle of the floor, twisting his battered hat and easing from one foot to the other. He scowled at Hemptonning's back, more convinced than ever that his employer was a fool.

Fawcett grinned at the picture they presented. It was something to have his victim on his side.

"Here we are," he called from the threshold with well-simulated buoyancy. He directed his grin at Zeke and held out his cap. "Perhaps you can recognize this too! No? The tree!" He laughed, with a sharp glance at the man: "You ran right over and made a mark on the tree, I suppose, so you wouldn't mistake it?"

"I didn't put no mark on it." Zeke shuffled, and his gaze went resentfully to Hemptonning. He had a thought to take it all back and let the old man and his books go to— But his one-track mind would not permit that. He had started something; so he went on: "I didn't have to put no mark on the tree. I know it."

"That's fine." Fawcett prayed that Zeke would be stricken blind. He walked over and slipped an arm under his host's. "I brought your cap too, sir. Let's hurry to the end of this farce."

THEY went out into the late afternoon sunshine with Zeke trailing. The old man took occasion, as they proceeded arm in arm, to apologize for his servant.

"He means well," responded Fawcett magnanimously. "He is actuated by a desire to be of service to you, or—"

Hemptonning shook his head sorrowfully. The unspoken implication was plain.

"Or else,"—he hated to say this, but, feeling that it was his duty to leave no doubt of the trust he imposed in his guest, he parroted the thought Fawcett had inculcated,—"he has become frightened and is striving to distract attention from himself at your expense."

"Exactly," agreed Fawcett. "Though I can't understand how he expects to carry it through. This excursion to—er—to interview a tree, for instance,"—he laughed with magnificent nerve,—"is either a simple piece of idiocy or some trick. Some trick," he repeated, preparing for a difficult situation, "by which he hopes to create a seeming basis for his contention—a trick which we may have to get an expert forester to expose."

Having planted this additional seed in old Joshua's brain, Fawcett gave him no time to reply. They were in the meadow.

"Come!" He waved Zeke forward. "Pick out your tree, and we'll see if it's working. Which is it?"

Zeke pointed sullenly.

They moved toward the tree indicated.

"Any particular branch?" asked Fawcett affably. "Or must I walk around it

until I strike a convenient one?" He wondered whether his present advantage of having half-discredited Zeke would crumble entirely when old Joshua saw that the tree made good this part of the man's claim.

A few paces from the tree they halted.

"Don't make a mistake," Fawcett advised frivolously. If he could rattle Zeke! "One chance is all you get, you know."

Zeke ignored the sally. He walked round the tree till he faced the house.

"You was going this way," he said.

"Right!" Fawcett stepped briskly to join him. His eye measured the distance from the lowermost branches to the ground. He postponed the test a minute more while he smiled at his host and puzzled vainly for some means of beating it. He saw none.

"Here goes for the trained tree!" he remarked lightly. A fraction more he paused, biting the inside of his lip and instinctively shrinking an inch in his height; then he advanced.

George Harold Fawcett closed his eyes as he passed beneath the branches. His hands, stuffed into his coat pockets, gripped hard. He held his breath while he cursed his impotence; and he made ready to face Joshua Hemptonning and attempt to brazen it out.

Five paces, he had speculated, would bring him into contact with the branches. He counted—five, six, seven! Eight!

Unconsciously, he imagined, he had shortened his stride to delay the fateful moment. Nine! He lengthened his step. Ten! Had he swerved and missed going under the tree? He opened his eyes. And as he realized that he had gone beyond the true,—that his cay still was on his head, that the branches had not even touched him,—Joshua Hemptonning actually applauded by clapping his hands.

"I knew it!" cried the old man happily. He hurried to Fawcett, who was staring at the tree while he recovered his breath. "The tree doesn't come within inches of your head, my boy—not within inches."

FAWCETT'S blank gaze dropped from the tree to Zeke, and the dark eyes became animated by a sparkling glare. The tree that was to condemn him had vindicated him! He could not resist a sneer—

He drove another spike into Zeke's guns and smiled significantly at Joshua: "You should have learned my exact height before attempting anything like this. "I'm only five feet ten, and these branches"—he went back under them, looking upward—"are easily over six feet from the ground."

His jaw hanging, Zeke stared in a panic of unbelief. Until a minute ago he would have sworn that he had seen this tree whip the cap from Fawcett's head that morning. Now—his gaze jumped to the other trees in the meadow.

"Oh, no!" chuckled Fawcett. "You only had one chance! If we try out all the trees on the landscape, doubtless we'll come to one I can't pass under. You said this was it. Now what have you got to say?"

"Yes," the bibliophile added to Zeke's discomfiture, "how do you explain? Mr.

Fawcett has shown you to be untruthful. So has the tree which you said would prove your words. How do you explain it?"

Zeke gulped. His mind was wrecked on its single track. He looked from the old man to Fawcett, and he saw that George Harold's eyes were frankly insolent, contemptuous, mocking.

"I seën it," he began stubbornly. "I seen him—"

"No more—no more!" his employer stopped him angrily. "You did not see any such thing. That has been demonstrated."

FAWCETT was interceding for the confounded Zeke when there came an interruption in the arrival of an official personage—the constable from the neighboring village. The tale of robbery, emanating from the Hemptonning kitchen, had brought him posthaste to the scene.

"Ye been robbed," he fired in a tone that dared Hemptonning to deny. The constable was aggrieved because he had not been summoned immediately. This was his territory, and crime within it was his business; he wasn't going to be cheated.

Hemptonning looked at Fawcett for guidance. He knew the official status of his questioner, but hadn't they decided upon secrecy as the safest course? Fawcett saw where the leak had occurred. There was no use attempting concealment any longer. He raised his brows and nodded slightly to the old man as a signal to acknowledge the imputation.

"Yes," conceded Joshua; "I've been robbed."

"Then why didn't ye call me to ketch the thief?" snapped the constable. He produced a notebook and stubby pencil: "The details, Mr. Hemptonning—all the details; an' don't skip nothin'."

After said details had been recorded, the constable turned his eagle eye on Zeke, who stood dourly in the background. He remembered that when he arrived, there had been in progress what he would have termed an argument.

"What's he got to do with it?" He jerked a thumb at Zeke.

Fawcett hammered another spike. "Is he trustworthy?" he asked in a heavy aside to Hemptonning.

"Eh? What's that? Who?" The constable bridled. "Ye talkin' about me, young feller?"

"No, not you. I was talking about—some one else. . . . . You can tell me later, Mr. Hemptonning."

"Ye talkin' about him?" The constable squinted at Zeke. "What's he got to do with it? Why're ye all out here hangin' round this tree?"

Hemptonning's eyes appealed to Fawcett. Again George Harold signified that he might as well answer. Since Zeke had thrust himself into the case, Zeke might as well be used. It was his turn to do some explaining.

The constable considered Zeke judicially when the tree fiasco had been told.

"What ye got to say now?"

"I seen him," said Zeke; and then while being "put over the jumps," as the constable expressed it, he admitted his close acquaintance during the night with the barrel of cider.

"Ye was drunk," said the constable, "an' seein' things."

"I wasn't," said Zeke. "I seen him."

"Were you out the night before—when the burglary took place?" asked Fawcett.

Zeke hesitated, wetting his lips. It was beginning to filter through his thick skull that Fawcett was deftly directing suspicion toward him. "Yes," he said uneasily.

"See anybody prowling?"

"No."

"Where was ye?" the constable took up the questioning.

"Visitin' an' drinkin' cider."

Fawcett looked meaningly at the constable. The constable contemplated Zeke severely. Zeke glared defiance at them.

"It—it is hardly likely—I don't believe he had any hand in it." Joshua broke the silence which seemed to threaten Zeke. "He—he has always been faithful—"

"Them faithful kind's the kind ye got to watch," barked the constable knowingly. "'Twouldn't surprise me none if—You come with me till we see where you was night afore last."

Whereupon it was learned that Zeke had taken two hours to make the ten-minute walk home from the cider party the night the library window was opened. Upon his inability to explain that lapse other than by the broad statement that he must have taken his time along the way, Zeke was landed in the lockup.

"Don't take us officers long, ye see," the triumphant constable told Joshua Hemptonning. "I'll grill him now, an' ye'll have yer books in a jiffy."

"A smart man, that," said George Harold soberly when the constable had departed.

The aged bibliophile sighed. "I'm sorry about Zeke."

"Um!" George Harold Fawcett hid a grin. "Some folks are fools, aren't they—starting things they can't finish!"

THE mystery was as complete as ever when Jean Mercer drove up to the Hemptonning house on the fourth day. Her heart went right out to old Joshua, so pathetic was he in his dejection and so anxiously greedy for the comforting assurances with which George Harold Fawcett soothed him.

Of Fawcett she did not think so much. He was too suave—gracious to the point of oiliness, in her opinion. His dark eyes with their changing hues—she saw the fires in them when he met her—categoried him as a doubtful quantity. Also—which did not reduce her instinctive feeling against him—she read beneath the surface his amusement over her entrance into the case.

Yet it was to Fawcett more than the old man that Jean turned for information. He gave it with frankness, down to the latest conclusions expressed by the constable and the county detectives who had reinforced him.

"They believe the arrest of this man Zeke has frightened his accomplices out of pressing their demand for the fifty thousand dollars," he told her. "There has been no word since the letter that came within forty-eight hours of the burglary."

The activity of the authorities brought

about by Zeke's boomerang had caused Fawcett to revise his schedule and flag the letter which was to follow fast on the other. Now he purposed holding off further action until the affair had quieted down—until the bibliophile was in such despair that he would pay immediately and say nothing.

For all his studious, indolent manner, Jean discerned in Fawcett a steel-spring-like tension. She observed how the old man deferred to Fawcett's opinion, how thoroughly, as she phrased it, he dominated Joshua Hemptonning mentally. She saw that though he was ever at her command and ready to impart information, his dark eyes never left her face. And she noticed that George Harold Fawcett stressed the fact of the open window and never neglected an opportunity to mention, unobtrusively and purely casually, that Zeke was expected to crack and confess at any minute. In truth, Zeke had continued sulkily dumb, having given up even his insistence that the tree had snatched off Fawcett's cap.

"About that tree—" Jean smiled fetchingly at Fawcett. "Why do you suppose he ever invented such a silly story?"

Fawcett's eyes deepened a shade as they had done before when mention was made of the tree. Jean set it down as a none-too-welcome subject to him.

"It was silly," he laughed. "The police ascribe it to the cider." He steered conversation into other channels.

"There were no finger-prints on the books?" asked Jean, to bring him back to the point so she might watch the gleam of his eyes.

"Mine and Mr. Hemptonning's." He laughed again, but his gaze did not match the laughter. "Burglars always wear gloves, don't they?"

IN spite of his undertone of amusement concerning Jean, however, Fawcett paid her the compliment of deciding that for two reasons he would stay close by her—because she was a tremendous relief to look upon in comparison with decrepit old Joshua, and because she had a dangerous amount of brains. He sought her company, therefore, and had no difficulty finding it. Jean Mercer was running on her first impression that George Harold Fawcett was worth cultivating.

The forenoon of her second day at the house was devoted by Jean to study of the letter. Then she wrote very concise instructions to Saunders, the superintendent of the Private Intelligence Bureau. Next day brought Joshua Hemptonning another letter, typewritten on cheap paper.

Miss Mercer maneuvered so that when the mail was delivered, both she and Fawcett were with the old man. They were discussing the robbery for the hundredth time. Joshua was smiling wanly, encouraged by Fawcett's unending optimism, when he opened the letter.

As on the morning that he had been notified of the raid on his books, the old man gave voice to a sudden cry; but now it was of gladness. Fawcett whirled on him. Jean watched Fawcett.

Unable to speak, Hemptonning offered the letter. Fawcett almost snatched it from his hand.

"What the—" George Harold Fawcett bit off the exclamation, which had an unwonted harshness. His face darkened, and his mouth grew tight. He read the letter twice while the veins corded at his temples and his body became rigid.

"May I see it, please?"

Fawcett jumped as Jean Mercer spoke. His eyes were aflame. Silently he handed her the letter.

There were only two lines:

> Will call for fifty thousand dollars. Have it ready. Fair trade, or something will be totally destroyed.

"That looks pretty bad," said Jean solemnly. "They are very daring."

Her glance was on Fawcett. He recovered himself, but his startled, angry look did not wholly disappear. What right had his partner to mix up the deal on his own initiative? He had his orders—why didn't he obey? Or—George Harold Fawcett was staggered by the thought—perhaps he was selling Fawcett out on his own scheme!

"Will you have the money when they come, Mr. Hemptonning?" he asked evenly.

"Of course—of course," said old Joshua querulously. "I'll get it first thing in the morning."

Fawcett saw himself now being double-crossed.

Jean Mercer smiled covertly, and addressed Hemptonning:

"We can capture them when—"

"No—no!" Joshua negatived that. He sat up, gesticulating emphatically. "We'll say nothing about this to the police. You must promise not to mention it to anyone."

Jean was openly disappointed.

"It isn't right to encourage crime like that," she protested. "You should—"

"I want the pages." Thus the old collector closed the question, a new strength in his body and tone. "That's all I want—the pages."

Jean appealed for support. "Don't you think it is wrong, Mr. Fawcett?" she asked.

"Yes,"—George Harold Fawcett's mind was elsewhere, but as Joshua gave heed to him he added,—"and no. I can readily understand Mr. Hemptonning's feelings."

He reassumed the cloak of the enthusiast. "You do not look upon these volumes as he does, Miss Mercer."

"I guess not." Jean's interest lagged. "That puts me out of the running. There's nothing to do but wait."

"That's all," said Joshua.

FOR George Harold Fawcett the waiting was more of a trial than it was for Joshua Hemptonning. To the bibliophile they were hours of joyful anticipation; each tick of the clock brought nearer the restoration of the pages of his precious books. To Fawcett each second was a suspense that fanned anger within him. It required all his self-control to refrain from going to a telephone to upbraid his partner for jeopardizing their scheme by too hasty action. He would have telephoned, regardless, had it not been patent that no move would be made for the money before the

morrow. Hemptonning required that time to get it.

During that evening Jean Mercer found unbounded and subtle pleasure in harassing the perturbed Fawcett by insisting upon entertaining, and being entertained, by him. Fawcett squirmed, but he could not escape.

Incidentally she wrote to her chief and sent a man to the station to post the letter that night. She advised that a detective be assigned to attend the arrival of herself and a man in New York the following forenoon. His duty would be to learn to whom her companion might telephone; that was all.

Jean went to sleep that night smiling. Joshua Hemptonning went to sleep smiling. George Harold Fawcett didn't sleep, but sat moodily by his window, glowering at a tree out in the moonlit meadow.

OVER her breakfast cup Jean Mercer yawned, for it was rather a dreary meal.

Old Joshua was too excited to bother about food; he was on tenterhooks for fear the call would come for the fifty thousand dollars before his librarian should return from New York with the cash. George Harold Fawcett sat at table with her, but he was not much more companionable.

"You look as if you'd had a poor night," remarked Jean.

Fawcett's tired eyes, darker now with the shadows about them, regarded her thoughtfully. He seemed to catch a tone of malice in her words, but her features reflected none of it.

"Yes," he said. "I've been—studying too much lately." He had. He'd been studying the situation all night, without satisfaction.

"Then I tell you what—" Jean brightened and leaned toward him: "Now that this book mystery is as good as ended, take me into town. I have to go. It will do you good to get away from,—" she grimaced,—"from the old man. You've been too much with him. It isn't your studying that has you frayed," she diagnosed; "it's Joshua. To tell the truth, he's a bit on my nerves."

Her suggestion did not win an immediate response from him. It would suit him perfectly to get away from the house and to telephone, but what if his partner should come in his absence and secure the money? If he *were* double-crossing George Harold, he would have a clear field. On the other hand, if Fawcett were to depart suddenly, even for a few hours, at this juncture,—practically as soon as it was assured that the ransom would be paid,—might not old Hemptonning develop a belated suspicion?

"I believe he'd be glad if we got out of the way," Jean answered his last unspoken thought. "He's running round like a hen with its head off, and he hasn't warned us more than a score of times not to interfere when the man shows up for the cash. He's afraid we'll try to have this burgular arrested, and so cause the destruction of the stolen pages."

"Perhaps." Fawcett was uncommittal. Still, he hesitated. He could not quite dispel the conviction that there were claws somewhere in the make-up of this

young woman. He chewed on an oath. No two ways about it, he had to get into communication with his partner and make him hold off until it became clear what Jean Mercer was doing.

"We'll ask Mr. Hemptonning," he assented. "If, as you say, he'd prefer to be left alone to conduct the negotiations, I'll go to New York."

"I'm going, anyhow," repeated Jean carelessly.

And as she intended, these three words finally decided the course of George Harold Fawcett. As she rose from the table, he knew that the choice had been taken from him. Not only was it essential to talk with his partner, furthermore, but he must not let Jean Mercer out of his sight.

"I'll go," he said shortly.

"On the nine-thirty train," said Jean.

DURING the hour's ride to New York the conversation between Jean and Fawcett was far from brilliant. They were too busily occupied with their individual and counter problems.

Jean was backing a hunch—pushing it to the limit. But it did not altogether lack foundation. There was no doubt that she had George Harold Fawcett "up in the air." The second letter had put him there. Considering how he had been jarred by that unexpected demand, it was reasonable to assume that he would seek some explanation of it from its supposed writer. His manner upon its receipt had confirmed her assumption that he was implicated in the theft.

It was a case now of letting the affair run its normal course. There was nothing else she could think of doing except to leave the lead to him and see whether she had indeed succeeded in forcing him to communicate with his accomplice. She had calculated that he would not write but would reach his partner personally or by telephone. He could not phone from the Hemptonning house; he would not phone from the village. So she had invited him to accompany her to New York, thus giving him an excuse to telephone with safety. And judging that he would do so at the earliest possible opportunity, she had the detective waiting to check up on any number he might call.

Fawcett's prospects were less cheerful. Aside from the worry which Jean Mercer occasioned him, he was confronted by the possibility that his partner already was on the way to collect from Hemptonning. If that were so, George Harold had grave misgivings regarding his own profits from the job. His thoughts were accordingly as gloomy as the rainstorm that came rolling over from the Jersey hills when they were still halfway to the city.

AT the terminal Jean made straight for the telephone-booths. She did not look for the detective who was to meet her. She took it for granted that he was there.

"I've a couple of calls to make," she smiled, "before I do an errand uptown. You don't mind waiting?"

"Not at all." Fawcett also smiled. This simplified things.

"I'll be ten minutes at least," added Jean. "Some instructions to my dressmaker, you know."

"I'll be here." Fawcett located another group of booths across the concourse. Ten minutes!

He waited till she disappeared, then hurried over to the other phones. On the way he looked back, but only to make sure that she had not reappeared.

Fawcett talked with his partner less than a minute.

"You don't know anything about the letter!" Amazement struggled with fury in his voice. "You're on the level in that? All right—I'll take your word. Now get out of there—quick. Get out!" His simmering curse was unfinished as he banged down the receiver.

Outside the booth he stood scrutinizing the people near by. None appeared to be interested in him. He circled before cutting across the concourse. No one followed.

His perplexity increased as he resumed his place where Jean had left him. Was there really any ulterior object in this journey of hers to the city? What was it? How did it affect him? If she expected him to reveal anything, why had she given him the chance to send a message without her knowing about it? He was certain now that he was not being trailed.

George Harold Fawcett grinned his relief. That letter was the work of some nut—one of the sort that frequently write to the police confessing crime. It didn't mean a thing. He'd sent his partner rushing to cover without reason. And Jean Mercer! A false alarm!

GEORGE HAROLD FAWCETT probably would have taken cover himself had he been aware that even while he was telephoning, Jean's associate was reporting to Saunders. Only a step behind Fawcett, he had copied the number from the operator's record sheet.

"What next, Chief?" he asked. "Do I stay by him?"

"No. That's all. That's a number in the Forties. Chase out there. I've got Sloan and Tompkins waiting at Times Square. Jean said to have somebody uptown. I'll shoot them over."

Within three minutes the two detectives at Times Square were headed for a rooming-house on Forty-sixth Street, with instructions to let nobody leave it. Saunders talked with Headquarters and had a couple of city detectives rushed to the house to make the action less high-handed than it would be if carried out by the operatives of the private agency alone. Jean had suggested that the pages from the Hemptonning books likely would be wherever Fawcett phoned. They were—because the sleuths walked in as Fawcett's partner was departing—and they held him.

Since it was not given to Fawcett to know all this, he greeted Jean with renewed lightness of heart as she emerged from the booth.

"Where now, Miss Mercer?"

"A little shopping and a brief visit on the Drive." She hooked a hand into his arm. "I'm not taking up your time—there's nothing you wish to do?"

"Nothing but enjoy the day with you!" He was care-free and gallant, now that his alarm had been dissolved. She rewarded his speech with a flirtatious smile;

and she smiled behind that as she brought the flame to his eyes with the irrelevant comment:

"I wonder whether Mr. Hemptonning has been called on for the fifty thousand?"

Fawcett darted a look at her. Claws again? No—just chatter.

"You should be more concerned about your hat," he laughed. "It's still raining hard."

"Oh, this—" She wagged her Neapolitan straw. "Rain wont hurt it."

On good terms they taxied up Fifth Avenue. Jean stopped at several shops, from one of which, while Fawcett waited in the cab, she phoned Saunders and heard from him of the arrest and the recovery of the missing pages.

"Have a man on the first train after three o'clock for Crestridge, New Jersey," she requested gleefully. "I don't know exactly what time it goes. . . . . What? Oh, the tree! I don't know about that—not yet. But. . . . . Have—who are you sending?"

"Sloan."

"Then have Sloan bring the pages. Old Joshua Hemptonning will die if he doesn't get them."

Her hat did get wet as she skipped back and forth from the cab to the store. It was flopping down about her face when she rejoined Fawcett.

"I'm sorry," he lamented. "I should have thought to get an umbrella sooner. You're soaking."

"Doesn't matter—I like rain." She laughed merrily. The stolen pages had been recovered. Fawcett's partner was under arrest! Now to get George Harold!

AFTER luncheon they started for Riverside Drive. The rain had ceased.

"Let's take a bus," said Jean on an impulse. That's how she often outstripped her fellow investigators—she acted on impulses while they sought reasons.

"A cab," he objected.

"Top of a bus," insisted Jean.

They boarded the stage at Fiftieth Street. Her hat was in sad condition, shapeless and flapping.

"Wont you stop and get a hat?" he proposed for the tenth time. "That would drive me mad if I were wearing it."

"No. It may rain again. This is all right." In the mind of Jean Mercer had been formed an idea—an idea still vague, misty, chimerical, but still taking shape—taking shape, in a way, as the hat lost shape.

On Fifty-seventh Street the guard climbed to the top of the bus and intoned his customary singsong as they rumbled below the elevated structure:

"Low bridge! Keep your heads down! Low bridge!"

A trickle of water from the trestle splashed on the back of Jean Mercer's neck.

"Ouch!" She shivered as it ran down her spine. The bus gave a lurch; her hat slopped down again, but she only laughed.

She pressed the bell signal to the driver. The eyes she turned on Fawcett were sparkling.

"Let's get off and take a cab. This is too—too bumpy."

Really, she wanted to save time, now that she *knew*.

THE rain was again falling steadily when they got back to the Hemptonning place. Fawcett regretted that Jean had cut their day short, that she would bid Joshua good-by and return to town that night. She had been mighty good company, especially on the latter part of their trip—since the ride on the bus. He hoped he'd see her again—in town, perhaps, sometime. She hoped he would.

At the entrance to the Hemptonning grounds she halted the machine Joshua had sent to the station for them. Her face was alight with mischief.

"I'll race you across the meadow!"

"It's pouring—and the grass is sopping wet," he protested.

Her face upturned close to his. She pouted.

"I don't care. It's ages since I galloped in wet grass. We'll have to change our shoes and clothes anyway." She opened the door, and was out. She spread her arms invitingly in the rain. "Come! If you wont, I'll—"

"Coming!" laughed George Harold Fawcett, and he sprang out beside her.

"Off!" cried Jean, gathering up her skirts.

She was leading by five yards when she passed under the maple. Intent upon catching up with her, Fawcett did not observe whither his steps were taking him.

Jean stopped short and wheeled just as Fawcett ran beneath the tree.

"Low bridge!" she rippled. "Keep your head down!"

But for George Harold Fawcett the warning came too late. His hat lay on the grass, brushed from his head by the same branches that had swept off his cap six days before at daybreak. And on his forehead was gathering a thin line of blood where a twig had scratched him!

"It had been raining, you remember, when this—er—accident happened before," explained Jean quietly. "The weather-bureau records show that. The branches were heavy then—as they are now."

George Harold Fawcett sneered. "That means—what?"

"Nothing to you—except a few years in jail, I fancy," she retorted. She noted the village flivver chugging into the driveway from the road. "Here comes one of the men who arrested your partner—and he is bringing the pages you cut from Mr. Hemptonning's books!"

The detective had already approached from the flivver.

"Don't swear like that, Mr. Fawcett," said Jean. She picked up his hat and extended it to him. He didn't see it.

She nodded to Sloan. "Mr. George Harold Fawcett," she introduced, "who is to take Zeke's place down in the lock-up. We'll make the constable a gift of him! Too bad, Mr. Fawcett, that you wont be able to spend another day with me in New York—soon!"

Fawcett dabbed a handkerchief to his smarting forehead. He contemplated the tracery of blood on it. Claws? He felt them now—claws that scratched!

THE ODYSSEY OF 'NIAS

(Continued from page 82)

stopped, but 'Nias didn't. The boy went straight on, up the hill for another block, rounded the post-office corner and drew his wagon into police headquarters.

"Ugh!" Spud groaned; and jerking off his derby hat, he ran.

CRONIN missed his guess. It took him longer than two minutes to adjust conflicting titles at the City Hall. The aggrieved Mr. Rudolph Barker tumbled out of his car, followed by two children who clamored for their wagon that Papa had painted. All of his life 'Nias had conceded property to white children—in presence of their papas; but now the smudgy boy stood firm, and refused to give up.

"Mr. Barker," Cronin asked again, twisting his mustache, "you are *dead certain sure* that this is your wagon?"

"Of course I'm sure. So are these children. That demijohn does not belong to me." Mr. Barker evicted the jug from the wagon without causing 'Nias the least show of concern.

"Three witnesses." Cronin weighed their evidence and called for proof from the defense. "'Nias, where'd you say you got this wagon?"

"From Mrs. Windy."

"Who's Mrs. Windy?"

"Chunky-built white lady on Cherry Street. Mose Friley drives her car."

"You impudent little devil! Why don't you say Mrs. J. Garner Wyndham. Now everybody hold yo' hosses whilst I talks with the lady." Cronin removed his helmet, brushed some specks from his uniform and bowed elaborately at the phone as he called for Number 3979.

At the other end of the wire Mrs. Wyndham was superintending the decorators in her blue-and-gold drawing-room when the starchy housegirl appeared.

"Telephone, ma'am."

"Take the message, and say I'm busy."

"Dat's what I tol' him, ma'am. But he 'low he's *'bleeged* to speak wid you, yo' own se'f."

"Well, who is it?"

"De Chief o' Polices."

"Chief of Police?"

Most uncomfortably Mrs. Wyndham recalled a slick-headed bootlegger in a gray derby hat, and with a partner in jail. Her knees weakened, but she nerved herself to stiffen up and reply:

"Elise, I have no business with the police. They must be mistaken."

"No'm, dey aint. Dey done 'rested somebody, an'—"

"Hush, Elise!" Mrs. Wyndham considered it safer to withdraw and question the girl where these gossiping decorators could not hear.

"Now, Elise, precisely what *did* the officer say?"

"He say ef it's too much trouble fer you to come to yo' telephone, he'd call at yo' house his own se'f."

At every hazard she must stop this nefarious raid, and Cronin promptly heard the lady's voice.

"This is Mrs. Wyndham. You wish to speak with me? . . . . Yes—I gave that wagon to a little colored boy . . . . He's one of Aunt Cannie's orphans; delinquent children, you know, are my hobby . . . . . The color? I am not sure as to the original color. But this morning the little boy came to my house, and his wagon was newly painted white. Yes, the same wagon that I gave him. Certainly, certainly. No trouble whatever. I'm *glad* you rang me up. It is always a pleasure to confer with Officer Cronin. I beg your pardon? What *did* you say? A demijohn? In the *wagon?*"

The wire went dead. Mrs. Wyndham collapsed into her brocaded chair, while Patrolman Cronin swelled like a proud frog and strutted away from the phone.

"There's a *lady* for you," he said to Barker, and to 'Nias and the crowd. "Take it from me! She's the genu*wine* all-wool article. And, 'Nias, she puts you in the clear."

"In the clear?" Mr. Barker repeated.

"Sure. Mrs. Wyndham says to me: 'Officer Cronin,' says she, 'it's a pleasure to confer wid ye. I gave 'Nias the wagon. Yes, I bought it from Barney McNamara!' —Mr. Barker, did you buy yours from Barney?"

"No, I—"

"Bought it from Wright Brothers?"

"No, I bought mine at private sale."

Not until then did Cronin begin to smell the real mouse, and demanded:

"Mr. Barker, who *did* you buy that wagon from?"

THE white complainant felt himself driven to the defensive. He didn't want to tell where he had obtained the wagon, and Cronin had to extort the information piecemeal, that Mr. Barker had paid fifty cents for it to a negro boy whose name he did not know.

"*I* know him!" 'Nias said. "Dat boy *stole* my waggin from onderneath Aunt Cannie's gallery."

"Then how'd you get it back?" Cronin asked, and 'Nias answered straight.

"I seen dis gentmun paintin' my waggin in his back yard. So dat night when he lef' it out to dry, I goes an' gits my waggin."

"Went and got it, hey?" the big Irishman chuckled. "Then kape it. Mr. Barker, we'll call your matter settled." Turning his back upon the late complainant, Cronin picked up the demijohn and asked:

"'Nias, what's this in here?"

"'Lasses."

"Where'd you get it?"

"From a country feller what makes 'lasses fer Mrs. Windy."

By instinct Cronin mistrusted all matter contained in jugs. Stoppers, or even flies, proved nothing. He never took anybody's word about liquid contents.

"I'll try a swig meself," he said, and 'Nias felt the rabbit-itch in both feet as Cronin swung the demijohn into the crook of his elbow, with an expert ease gained only by long practice. In such position the Irishman could fill a thimble and

never waste a drop. Out came the corncob stopper, and the demijohn began to tilt. Even at that crisis the courage of little 'Nias didn't flicker. He gazed up steadily at the officer while Cronin poured a slow trickle into his palm and tasted it—and tasted it again. The unbelieving Cronin was convinced. "Be all the saints," he declared, "it *is* molasses!"

"Dat's what I tol' you," said 'Nias.

Then Cronin set back the jug into the wagon and gave 'Nias a push toward the door, saying:

"Now beat it! And prisint my compliments to the lady that saved ye from the gallows."

WITH unhurried composure 'Nias dragged his wagon from police headquarters; the lady at home seemed more in need of saving. Since Cronin had mentioned a demijohn, Mrs. Wyndham supposed that hers had been confiscated. What a *contretemps!* At the very moment when Mrs. F. R. M. Chester-Smith was being welcomed to Wyndham Terrace, the afternoon papers would spread this distinctly unpleasant publicity.

Staring out upon her lawn, the fluttered Mrs. Wyndham was seeing phantom demijohns in every lilac bush, when a tousled little figure limped through her back gate, and she saw the actual demijohn in his wagon.

The battered condition of 'Nias was enough to make a perfect lady shudder as Mrs. Wyndham stepped out of her rear door, and the boy with a bleeding lip informed her:

"Lady, here's yo' 'lasses."

"Molasses? I have ordered no molasses. Go away."

Like a tribute he laid the demijohn at her feet, and 'Nias never blinked as he suggested: "Better take dis jug inside befo' de cop gits it."

Having delivered the goods, 'Nias left the lady staring down at her undesired demijohn, and backed his wagon to the feed-house, where he resumed the profitable job of loading bottles.

Never had Mrs. J. Garner Wyndham toted a demijohn of molasses, stopped with a corncob and sticky brown paper. But there was something in the boy's suggestion which fired her with a mysterious urge; and in the privacy of her pantry she took the most extreme precautions that nobody witnessed her opening of the jug.

Immediately a very wrathful lady—reminding herself that she *was* a lady—rushed across her back yard and jerked 'Nias by his elbow.

"*Who sent me that demijohn?*" she demanded.

"Spud." 'Nias never looked up, for fear of smashing an armful of bottles worth fifteen cents.

"Why did Spud send *molasses?*"

"Dat aint 'lasses."

"I say it *is*. You must *not* dispute my statement."

"Lemme see it."

"Very good. Come into the house."

A brunette midget followed the opulent blonde lady into her pantry, where 'Nias saw the open demijohn with a cup beside it, which cup undoubtedly contained a spoonful of molasses.

"There it is—*molasses!*" Mrs. Wyndham pointed. "*Look* at it."

Tiny 'Nias had to mount a chair before he could reach the top of a porcelain table, and hold the demijohn upside down until its syrupy stream stopped flowing—not more than half a cup.

"Dat's *all* de 'lasses," he said. "Got a rag—an' a stick?"

Mrs. Wyndham produced a dishcloth, and one of those slim contraptions that are used to sharpen knives.

"Dis'll do," 'Nias approved, as he wrapped his rag around the steel and swabbed out the molasses from inside the demijohn's neck.

"Corkscrew," he ordered briefly. "A *long* un."

"Here it is," complied Mrs. Wyndham.

The little boy now set the demijohn on the floor, gripped it with both knobby knees, reached down the neck with his long corkscrew and pulled out a second stopper, three inches below the first. Then he poured again, and grinned.

"I reckin' *dat* aint 'lasses."

It was not molasses—decidedly not; Mrs. Wyndham assured herself by smelling and tasting. Then she promptly locked her treasure in a cabinet.

"You're a *good* little boy." The gracious lady turned and smiled. "But I observe that you have injured yourself?"

"No'm," 'Nias answered. "Dat aint nothin'. I jes runned over a white feller's autymobile—wid my waggin."

FORGOTTEN SOUL

(Continued from page 49)

are mirrored in the pavement like moons in showy water, I found the man whom I call Carton. The ship had sailed, and he had been going on. But nothing Carton does surprises me. He was drinking lemonade; he has a childish love for sweet things. When he saw me coming, he finished quickly, and began to scrape up the sugar with a spoon. He looked so innocent and simple that I was sure he had been up to something. But this tale is not about Carton.

"Tell me," I said without preliminary, "who is the little old walnut that Avice married, and why did she, and when?"

Carton ate his sugar quickly; he had been anxious, I think, lest I should interrupt him before he had had time to enjoy it all.

"I wish you'd let me alone," he said.

"I know; you're probably busy. But I'll not speak to you again, if I meet you fifty times, provided you'll tell me."

Another man would have asked me how I knew he could tell, but Carton doesn't say things that everyone knows. That perhaps accounts for his being called a silent man, when he really is not.

He looked round him first of all, so that he could lick his spoon without being observed. You can't finish the sugar by sucking.

"Well," he said, putting down the spoon with apparent regret, "what did you expect? She married Hagen, the richest old bird in Batavia."

"How long ago?"

"About two years."

"Then she—it was—"

"Oh, the country got her first. You don't think old Hagen would have looked at that moonlight slip of a thing we came out with from Singapore? Why, I believe she was actually pious—see her at church in the dining-saloon on Sundays? No? Well, I did, and she looked like something out of a stained-glass window."

"Mere pose."

"You're shallow. It was not mere pose—quite half of it was real. Oh, I grant you, the religiosity of a young girl on her promotion, so to speak; but there was something. And she was almost anemically refined—see her picking books out of the library? You never see anything; you read too much. Well, she'd purse up her lips over any author who had an ounce of blood in him, and take something by one of those popular women who write stuff like treacle crawling out of a jug. I tried to squeeze her hand, just as an experiment, and she drew it away with a look that had all the eleven thousand virgins of Cologne in it—just ten thousand and nine hundred and ninety-nine too many, by the way; I wonder how Bell liked them! That was Avice Ferrers.

"I saw her after she'd been with her sister in Weltevreden for about a year. It had just about got her then—"

"What?"

"The country. If you weren't a scientific man, you wouldn't be so stupid. She was pounds heavier, and her cheeks had that buttery smoothness; and she'd learned to do things with her eyes. And, man, her little soul—it wasn't ever a very big one— was just shriveling away under your gaze."

"One would think you'd been in love with her yourself," I said sourly. I did not care to hear all this semi-praise of the creature.

CARTON smiled. I don't know what his "history" is; very likely he never had one. You do not like that, dear lady? I cannot help it. If you ever meet Carton, you can tell him what you think about it, and him. But whatever his days may or may not have held, I know very well, nowadays, that pastry-hearted women like Avice have no hold upon him. I knew that I was lying when I accused him of being in love, and he knew that I knew. He just went on.

"You pick up little dry facts like an ant picking up grains of corn, and you store them away. Can't you get away from your anthill once in a while, and see—*see?* Doesn't it mean anything to you that Java was the place they got the monkey-man's bones—"

"Or didn't."

"I know as much about the evidence as you. I choose to assume they did. Because anyhow, it's here they would get monkey-men. There's something in Java—something that throws back.....Look at that."

I looked, but I saw only a Malay *serang* directing some laborers.

"Look at his physical type," said Carton. "I have to teach you your own business."

"Oh," I said. "His facial angle—"

"Confound his facial angle! Look at his expression; look at his feet— they're holding on to the ground. Look at the curve of his back and the hang of his arms. He's half monkey, as he stands, and there are millions like him."

"I don't quite follow you," I said in some confusion. For indeed, he seemed to me to be jumping about from subject to subject rather oddly. And I wanted to know about Miss Ferrers' marriage.

"You asked for it, and I'm giving it to you. It's all one. The force that turns out that Malay *serang*, that made the monkey-man—"

"*Pithecanthropos.*"

"I talk English when I'm talking English. That same force,—no one can say what it is, but it's rampant in Java,—it gets the European, and does things to him."

"It's the idle, sensual lives they lead," I objected briskly. "It's the way they—"

"Man, don't you see that that's an effect, not a cause? The thing gets them, as I tell you; among its effects are the lives that white people lead here. It got Avice Ferrers. And Hagen liked her because of it. And she was tired waiting for Bell; you see, he had suddenly cooled—"

"Now, there you're entirely wrong," I cut in. "Bell would never have changed to her. He was a dead goner."

"What I tell you is true. Bell hung round after her as much as ever, but he didn't press the marriage. He saw she was dying!"

"What?"

Carton looked at me with a God-give-us-patience sort of expression.

"Some of her, most of her," he chose to explain. "And I judge it made him rather sick. So by and by, when he disappeared—"

"Where did he go?" I asked suddenly and violently. It came upon me that this man, who knew so much too much, knew also the one thing I desired to know. And my heart was feeling sore for my "mate" Bell.

"When he disappeared," went on Carton maddeningly, "Hagen came forward. And what was left of Avice married him. I believe she's very happy. Now, if you don't mind excusing me, I have rather a lot to do."

"What are you doing?" I asked, as he got up from his table.

"Buying curios before the shops shut for the night," explained Carton easily. I do not think he ever bought a curio in his life. Carton lies sometimes. The strange thing is that his lies do not seem to matter, much. I should not call him an untruthful man. That seems odd, does it not? It would take Carton himself to disentangle it!

HE was gone, in his quiet, strolling way, before I had had time to remember that my question about Bell was still unanswered.

It was getting late by now, near nine o'clock, and the monstrous, gorging dinner of the hotel was in full progress. I left the marble lounge, and passed through

a forest of pillars—marble likewise, carved and gilded and set with tall looking-glasses—into the dining-hall. Here, in spite of the heat, one could feel almost cool. Punkahs, immense and innumerable, whirled above one's head, with a droning, hypnotizing sound. The roof, thirty feet away, had all its colored windows thrown open to the stars. The floor shone white as water under shielded moons of powerful arc-lamps. I took my table, choose a plain dish out of the scores of spiced, greasy compounds, ordered straight soda, as usual, and as usual endured the contempt of the proudly stepping wine-waiters in their white sarongs and jackets and gold-red sashes. No reason but that of poverty could, in the opinion of the wine-waiters, account for such mean-spirited ways.

Beside me, before me, fatted, groomed, exquisitely clean, the white men and women gorged and drank and drank. I thought I saw the back of Avice, a long way off at the other side of the hall. A procession of twenty-seven waiters wound past their chairs, carrying twenty-seven dishes of spice and relishes for the rice. They helped themselves to all. They buried themselves in mounds of rice, and afterward dined and drank. . . . .I saw them walking to their rooms, both flushed, though not overcome, with drink.

Avice laughed. She was walking as a native woman walks; she undulated from the ankles up. I thought of the moonlight girl on the Singapore steamer, years ago. And in a moment, something in my brain fitted sharply into something else, with a click. And I went to hunt for Carton.

"Mynheer Carton?" said the clerk in the magnificient office. "Mynheer Carton has paid his bill, and he have gone away."

"Where to?"

"Mynheer Carton have taken a motor to drive him quickly down to Tandjong Prick."

"The port? But the steamer has gone."

"One steamer have gone. There is another sail now."

"What time?"

The clerk looked at the clock.

"She have sailed five minutes ago."

IN the morning I went to look for the bungalow that Carton had spoken of. I was sure now—though I could not for the life of me have told how I was sure—that something of the mystery surrounding Bell's disappearance clung to, was connected with, the place they strangely called Forgotten Soul.

I can speak Malay. By that I do not mean the pigeon Malay that every tourist manages to pick up. I mean the real language, the copious, expressive, even literary tongue that carries from Singapore to New Guinea. I have found it useful in my work, but not quite so useful, somehow, as I should have expected. Carton, I remembered, used to talk odd nonsense about Malay to me.

"I don't know half what you do," he mocked at me once, "but it's about seven times as useful to me."

"Why?" I asked him, a little piqued—for his Malay is of the kind that actually jars on a sensitive, trained ear.

"Try once in a way not knowing any, when you go studying about the *kampongs,* and see how it works," he said.

That sounded simple nonsense to me. But somehow, today, as I went out into the soaking eleven o'clock sun, I remembered it. It followed me.

I went into the Chinese quarter—which was on my way to the suburb I was aiming for—and stood looking about me. There were as many Malays as Chinese. One of the miniature street-restaurants that one knows so well had made its stand beside a shop where they sold tin lamps and blue vases and Brummagem stuff generally—you can't find Chinese goods in a Chinese quarter of Sourabaya. There were some Javanese "hunkered" down beside the tiny stove and the swinging baskets; they were eating crackling fried stuff and seedy cakes. I had intended to address them in well-chosen phrases (for it is not every man who can put Malay together as I can), asking them just where the house that was named Forgotten Soul might be, and why it had acquired such a name. But some queer reminiscence of Carton and his many madnesses came over me, and instead I said haltingly, "Forgotten Soul—where?" and made signs as a man does who cannot speak any language but his own.

Then I got a shock.

"Old fool with the turtle back, why are you bothering me?" said the Javanese, with an accent of the most perfect courtesy, with an entirely gracious smile. Before this they had always answered my questions in set phrases of Malay, very polite, and their address was the proper one—"Tuan," which means, mostly, "Chief."

I saw that he did not suppose I understood. My feelings were hurt, for I am not really old, and if my serious studies have given me a little of the typical scholar's stoop, no one has ever been sufficiently struck by it to speak about it.

But I contained myself, and merely repeated my query, at the same time holding up a silver guilder. The eyes of the Javanese looked sharp and covetous. He turned to a friend, and said—I could hardly believe my ears: "Is it worth while telling the old turtle anything?"

"Certainly not," replied the man whom he had addressed. "At least, not for a silver guilder."

I looked at the man; he was really interesting—a strong Mongolian strain, allied to Bengali, and to pure Javanese, the latter nearly half, I should say. He signaled to the first man, and then said sharply, *"Wang mas!"* This means "gold money"—a rude way of expressing it; I should have put it much better.

NOW, of course, since the war, nobody has gold coin. I thought the two Javanese ought surely to know that, and I was just opening my mouth to say so in a properly turned sentence—for after all, what did it matter?—when I was suddenly struck by an idea. I can't think where I got it, unless I had caught that sort of thing from recent association with Carton.

It occurred to me that the Javanese did know, that with those swift, cunning minds of theirs, they had laid a trap to test my knowledge of Malay.

If that were so—

I did not answer other than by putting back the guilder and taking out, slowly and with display, a Dutch note for ten

guilders. A guilder, you will wish to know, is about one eighth of a pound, roughly speaking.

The Javanese looked at the note, and one said to the other, handing him a piece of fruit, as if they were talking only about food:

"Do you think it is a good thing to tell him anything?"

The other looked at the fruit, examined it, shook his head, and seemed to refuse to buy. What he said was:

"Tell him what he asks; there can't be any harm in that." And I regret to say he added something of a nature not flattering to my intelligence. I don't think I need repeat it.

The first Javanese, speaking slowly and very carefully, told me in Malay that the House of Forgotten Soul was a long way off, but that he had a friend who had a pony carriage. He asked me if I would have the carriage, and mentioned that it would cost me five guilders.

Five guilders was, I knew, an entirely absurd price, but I thought it best—in view of the character I had assumed—to nod agreement. The Javanese undid himself and rose, all in one flowing movement. His orange sarong and green jacket showed bright for a minute in the dark cave of a Chinese godown, and then vanished.

The "friend" must have been himself, for in a few minutes he came clattering out through an alley, seated in a silly little carriage of the kind that obliges the fare to perch uncertainly on a sort of shelf behind. I sprang up on the perch and allowed my Javanese to earn his five guilders by driving me in and out and round about the town of Sourabaya till he thought he had me fairly bewildered. In time he turned down a long, green, quiet road, an out-of-the-way sort of place, scattered with broken-down-looking godowns that once, in the days of the early occupation, might have been dwelling-houses of the old Dutch merchants. He stopped before one of them, shouted, as one shouts to a deaf man, "Forgotten Soul!" and pulled up the rickety little cart. I got down. The Javanese stood waiting, and I handed him his fare.

"You need not stop," I told him.

THE road was very quiet once he had gone. There were no vehicles here, almost no passers-by. Far above, the great poinciana trees met in a flutter of emerald and vermilion. Some Chinese coolies, dull-blue clad, with immense willow-pattern hats, went by swinging loads of fruit on the ends of long bamboos. Their yellow, ducklike feet made no sound upon the roadway. It was hot; it was dreamy. I felt, as one so often does in the fever countries, that nothing about me was real, that I had somehow imagined it all.

In the dream, I saw a house at the end of the road, standing a little back. It was the sort of house you do dream about—odd and somewhat sinister-looking, with blind eyes of shuttered window. The stone veranda-pillars were cracked across and across. There was—had been—a white-painted fence round the lot inclosing the building; it was nothing now but a jagged line of uprights held together by trails of sappy weeds. The paint on the shut door, on the close-fastened shutters,

was blue and blistered. A pox of falling plaster overspread the walls. Newer Dutch houses are one-storied, in Java; this, belonging to the old colonial days, was two-storied, its upper windows being sheltered only by the overhang of the immensely steep tiled roof. Something in the very height of the place, something overgrown and weedy, suggested the unwholesome upshooting life of jungles and dank marshes—or so I felt it, in my slightly fevered mood. I remember that I pulled a quinine bottle out of my pocket as I stood there, and swallowed, chokingly, without water, a couple of tabloids.

"If I don't take care," I thought, "I'll have a temperature before I know where I am, and then I shall be seeing things that aren't there."

I pocketed the bottle and looked about me. It might have been the fever, and it might not; but I felt reluctant to pass over the few yards that separated me from the house with the curious name. I fancied, somehow, that it was not as empty as it looked. I also thought that some one was looking at me.

THERE was nobody on the narrow, deserted road. Blue shadows from the poinciana leaves moved, many-fingered, upon the bone-white dust. A coppersmith-bird kept clinking his hammer and anvil, somewhere behind a wall; and I could hear the wind blowing. I gathered up my courage, and went to the door of the house. I don't know what I expected to do there. It was locked, and nobody answered when I rapped on it with a paling from the broken fence. The place sounded hollow inside. At the back I could find no entrance, and all the windows were closely shut and barred.

I went round to the front again, and stood in the roadway looking up. Once more I had the feeling—curiously distinct—that I was being looked at.

"It's the quinine," I said to myself; for by now my head was beginning to swim, and my skin to sweat, with the ten grains I had swallowed. But I did not believe what I said. I moved away from the range of shuttered windows at the front, into the tangled Sargasso Sea of creepers—jasmine, alamanda, passion-flower, I don't know what—that overflowed the side veranda. There I felt relief; I could think. And looking down at the cracked, green-molded pavement of the veranda floor, I saw something.

It was a half-smoked cigarette, the kind that colored people make for themselves out of any sort of paper. I don't know to this day why I picked it up. But the moment my eyes fell on the bit of smoked and scorched print that surrounded the ashy kernel, I knew that I, and Carton—I was sure now that Carton had not been ignorant—were right.

The print was a bit of a well-known mining journal, and it was all about tin. You have probably forgotten that Bell had been a tin man; so I will remind you of it. I had not forgotten. I knew, from internal evidence, that the paper was an old one; still, I was certain, after seeing it, that the house of Forgotten Soul, and Bell, had to do with each other.

There was nothing more to be done at the moment. The house was uninhabited, or if not, it was meant to look unin-

habited. I could find no sign of use about either of the entrances; on the contrary, doorsteps and doors looked exactly as if no one had crossed the one, or opened the other, since the days of Stamford Raffles. I went out into the wide streets and the sun again, got an unoccupied pony cart, after a good deal of walking, and drove back into town.

I AM a methodical man. I made inquiries at once from the proper authorities, and learned before four o'clock that the house belonged to an eccentric and miserly old Dutch lady who lived up in the mountains, and would not spend anything on the care of her unused town property. She had left the villa of "Hague" (such was its real, official name) just at it was, ever since her daughters had died in it of the plague, many years before. Had the place been disinfected? Most certainly; it was not that which had kept it unoccupied, merely the whim of a foolish old woman. She was the widow of a former governor—on that account, she had been allowed to leave "Hague" as she pleased; but if it had been anyone else! In any case, she was sure to die soon, and then the Government would pull the place down, and erect a modern bungalow. No, no one was living there, certainly not.

"Look in the native markets for anything," Carton used to say.

I recalled Carton's advice now, and it took me that afternoon, to the marketplace—not to the market of the town of Sourabaya, but to the long stretches of the market that lines the road by the port.

I sent away my car, and began to stroll about. Of course I was stared at; a white man, walking about among the natives attracts as much attention as a white elephant. I remember thinking that that sort of thing gets on a man's nerves before long; I felt glad that mine were steady as pin-wire. I did not care how much the people stared at me.

And remembering what had happened before, I used no native languages, but asked any questions I had to ask in the rudest of pigeon Malay. And as before, I was rewarded.

It may have been chance, and it may have been Providence—I do not know; I keep an open mind about these things—that showed me, in the hands of a Javanese peddler wrapping up hot-cakes, a scrap of greasy paper given him by the customer he was serving. It was a bit of the mining journal I have already mentioned.

THE buyer turned away with his purchases. I followed him down the road, and asked him if he would sell the cakes to me. I wanted, I said, to try what Javanese food was like.

The man was wearing one of those curious plaited hats, shaped like a medieval helmet, that one sees among the coolies. It was a large hat, close pulled down; I could not see his face clearly. He did not look at me, but he answered roughly in a word or two of curt refusal, gathered the cakes up close in his brown hands and turned away.

I was pondering over his accent—which I knew, but could not place—when I heard something that stopped me dead, there where I stood on the side of the burning roadway.

"Forgotten Soul." It was said in Javanese.

I pretended to drop something, and bent down, raking with one finger in the dust, so that I could hide the change of countenance I knew to be plainly visible. And I listened.

"The fool Englishman," said the voice, "is after Forgotten Soul."

Some one else answered him. I had straightened up now; I looked. It was another Javanese, and he said:

"As he is a fool, he will find out—nothing."

"If he found anything," said the first voice, "he would not understand."

The other made a noise of disdain, and said:

"Offer him fruit, and make him pay seven times the price. When it rains fish, shall one not reach out the hand?"

I thought it well to buy something, when they held me out a leaf full of mixed fruits, and to pay, without dispute, a couple of guilders more than I should have paid. I was going away, with a feeling of heavy defeat about me—for after all, what had I gained, save the knowledge that bits of old tin-mining papers were lying about the market?—when I saw the man in front, the purchaser of the cakes, unconsciously lift his hand to the wicker helmet on his head, and push it to one side.

Bell's way—Bell's gesture! I felt dizzy, as if the sun had pierced my pith topee and struck my brain. Then things cleared again, and I saw that the coolie, across the dark-brown heel that projected from one loose slipper, had an ineffaceable white scar. And in that moment I knew—almost all.

There was no more hesitation. I knew just what I must do. I took another car, and ordered the man to drive to the villa of "Hague." It was not so very far from the market, in a straight line. I should not have long to wait.

Through my mind, as we raced down the endless, black-hot road, with the telegraph-poles beating past us like a wood of thin light trees, so close did they appear, there went the recollection of the green deserted avenue, the house, the clinging weeds.....The weeds must do it for me; I could hide myself there.

I LEFT the car a little way from the avenue, and walked down alone. It was almost as I had left it the day before. The sun was getting low by now, and there were pools of liquid gold upon the road; a lot of red flowers had fallen from the tops of the trees, looking, in the dust, like stains of clotted blood. There was nobody about. Without delay—for in teeming Java no spot stays empty long—I hurried to the side veranda and parting the creepers, slipped into shelter behind them. I hadn't time to look for possible snakes, but fortunately there were none. The wide, glossy leaves and cup-shaped yellow flowers were closely knitted; they made a perfect screen. I remember how the flowers smelled, very faint, of honey. As I sat getting my breath again, and waiting, by and by he came.

I saw a lean, tall figure padding up the

road, a man in a yellow *kabaya* (Malay jacket) and the long, gay sarong worn by all Javanese. He had a helmet-shaped wicker hat; his bare dark feet were thrust into Javanese heel-less slippers, which flicked annoyingly at every step he took. His hands,—carrying the parcel of cakes,—and his face under the hat were dark brown; his eyebrows were black. His eyes—when I got a good look at them—were brown too, but not dark enough.

"Yes," I said to myself. I watched.

He did not go in by either of the doors. I understood the deserted appearance of the house, when I saw him glance round, and then, by some secret spring, pull out a shutter on the side veranda. He stepped inside, and before he had time to close the opening, I was in behind him.

THE man gave a great cry, dropped his poor bundle of food, and stood with his back against the nearest wall, staring, his hands stretched out.

I can't tell you how I felt. I ran to him. I seized his hands—the brown stain did not go up quite far enough; when I pulled on his wrists, they came down white inside the crumpling sleeve. I shouted questions; I cursed him for deserting his friends, and called him "good old chap," all in the same tangled sentence. And through it all, Bell, my friend Bell, stood and simply endured. He said nothing. He looked at me with eyes that were, and were not, his.

I fell silent presently. We stood staring at one another. I became aware of the room—it had been a sitting-room, perhaps; it was a mere wreck now—plaster on the floor, doors off their hinges, bars of dull light showing through broken shutters. There was a Malay mat in one corner, and I saw a couple of cooking-pots, and a spare sarong. No more.

"Bell—" I began again. But he interrupted, speaking for the first time:

"You had better talk Malay," he said in Malay. I noticed how well he spoke. I hadn't ever thought him a linguist.

"I want to know what has happened to you," I said. "Are you mad? What made you disappear all these years ago? What made you come to this cursed place? What does it all mean?"

"Do you know," replied Bell, "why the people call this house Forgotten Soul?"

"No."

"Because I've lived in it, so long, and I've been forgotten. I wish I could have been forgotten a little longer. A very little!"

"We didn't forget you," I said angrily. "You've been looked for up and down and—"

"Yes. But I didn't want to be found. I have no money."

With a rush it all came upon me. The wretched room, the food bought in the market, the native clothing, that

cost almost nothing to buy, and seldom needs renewal! Here, in the house so strangely named, he could have lived, as he had, for a few pence a day. He did not tell me — I do not know even now — where he got the pence. I have sometimes feared that it may have been by actual begging. At first I could find no words. I had to swallow hard before I spoke.

"Of course all that nonsense is finished. You'll come with me to my hotel and stay a bit, and then we'll get you another job somewhere."

Bell looked at me, and was silent. I felt his heavy resistance, like a dead weight dragging down.

"If not here," I said, "in the Malay States—you're known there; and if you lost one job, there'll be more to get. This is sheer madness."

I waited for his answer. It did not come. I saw a rat—two rats—sneak out of the broken flooring, and glide along the wall. They had scented the food. They seemed amazingly bold.

"This place must be alive with the brutes at night," I thought. "How can he stick it?" And again I spoke to him earnestly, urging him to come away with me.

Bell put down the parcel he was carrying, and turned his eyes—too light by just a shade for the dark of his stained face—upon me.

"You had better understand," he said. "There are reasons, three reasons, why I can't."

I was afraid to hear the reasons, but I said: "Go on."

"The first," he said, not looking at me, "is that Avice lost her soul."

"Don't be blasphemous," I told him.

HE did not seem to hear. "Of course," he said, "that made me not care. The Javanese have words even you don't know. They have words for this not caring; they know it. Well, I came not to care, and I came to live here. That was Two. I'd lost all the money I had, but the not-caring helped me to live. I lived like themselves, and they took me as one of themselves, by and by. They all knew, and they all helped me to hide. You came near being knifed here, the first day you came. I saw you, and I told them to let you alone; I didn't think you'd find—but nothing matters now, because there's a —a third reason."

If I had hated to hear the first reasons, I hated still worse to hear the last. I was afraid of it. I set my teeth to hear.

But after all, I was not to hear it. Bell went on:

"The third reason—you shall know tomorrow, if you promise to leave me now. I've only known it—a few minutes—myself."

"Why not today?" I asked. I could not face the night, with the thought of new mysteries overhanging. I have told it badly, no doubt, but this not-caring, this soul-losing, seemed to shake the very marrow of my mind.

Bell did not answer my question. He leaned against the wall, avoiding my eyes. "The rats come out of the ground," he said, as if he did not know that I was there. "They come out of the ground, where the Governor's daughters lie."

"You're going to have fever," I said. "Come back with me to the hotel."

"Not today," he said, still looking at the rats. "I promise you you may send a carriage for me tomorrow—late tomorrow—and I will come in it."

Bell, I remembered, was no promise-breaker. It seemed best to let him have his fancy, this one day.

"All right," I said, "I'll leave you now, but I'll send that carriage tomorrow afternoon."

He did not answer me. I left him there, silent, standing in the semi-darkness, looking down at the rats.

ON the following afternoon, I got a motorcar, and drove again to the street of Forgotten Soul. It was no longer quiet. In front of the house half a dozen Government coolies were waiting. The front door was open, and the weeds torn down.

As I whirled up to the house, a white man came out of it. He was tall and important-looking; he wore some sort of uniform.

"It is forbid to come in," he told me loudly, holding up one hand.

"What's the matter?" I asked him; "I've come to fetch the white man who lives here."

"No white man is living here. There is one dead."

"Dead!"

"He has died of bubonic plague of a very bad quick variety, in the night. They have reported to me, and I am come to remove the corpse and disinfect the place."

"I—I—he was well yesterday; I saw him. Are you sure it's the same? Can I—"

"It is not permit to go in. This is a white man disguised as native; there is no one who know who he has been. We will ask you for official information, if you have known him."

"How did he get it? Was it a bad—"

"The natives here, they say the rats were always coming out of the ground to the house, because it is too old. In Java, the rat is dangerous."

"Especially," I thought, "when plague people have been buried in the back yard." But I said nothing. What was there to say? Nor did I stop to be questioned; I knew what my mate Bell would have wished. I got into the car, as the Dutchman turned back to his work, and ordered the Malay chauffeur to go hard. We spun fast down the dusty avenue, where the poinciana blossoms still lay piled in ciots of scarlet, and all but upset another vehicle coming from the town. It was Bell's carriage, come to fetch him at last—the dead-cart from the hospital.

THE last time I saw the man I have called Carton, he told me a little—more than Carton generally tells. A flash of lightning one dark night, when he was passing the bungalow had shown him Bell, out in the garden. He had never been intimate with him, but he knew him instantly; Carton forgets nothing. He could not afford—so I gathered—to offend Bell's native friends. Hence the clever hints that set me at work. But Carton says I bungled it. I do not see what more I could have done.

TWO BELLS FOR PEGASUS

(Continued from page 45)

That match between the Fighting Wop of North Beach, and the Demon Teamster of Columbus Heights, was a *pièce de résistance* that roused the jaded appetites of even the regulars, and brought all the old-timers out of seclusion. Neither man had ever taken the count; each had his loyal following; everyone appreciated that Kid Mickey was the one best bet of the Forty Strong, just as Porky Schaupp was the pugilistic ace of the Heights gang. On the trail of the gaudy half-sheets that plastered the city's billboards, arguments mushroomed overnight.

"Two to one on Porky! No guy can give away twenty pounds. Two to one, the Wop goes home on a stretcher. Who wants it?"

"I'll take a chance on that. Let's see the color of your dough. The Kid's light; but oh, *boy*, if he connects!"

"See you at the fights next Friday night," said Supervisor Fleming to the President of the Chamber of Commerce. "Whom do you like?"

"Don't know yet; I always bet on the corners. If the little Wop is on my side of the house, I'll take him for a dollar. Look me up, Harry."

Thus the fever spread, while Kid Mickey trained religiously at night in the gym' above Sharkey's pool-room, and Porky Schaupp worked out before an admiring audience at the back of Steve Donovan's place.

Thursday evening, Jockey Williams' protégé went up to Cesare Botelli's restaurant, and led the proprietor to one side. He handed over two tickets that called for ringside seats.

"Don't know how you're going to work it," he began, "but I want you to bring my father down to the fireworks tomorrow night. This ticket with the cross on the stub is right under the ropes, and I'm going to knock Porky square into the old man's lap."

"Good," said Cesare. "I try. But eef you getta da knock yourself — whata then?"

"Well," said Mickey, "if anything like that happens, you and the old man better crawl right under the ring, because I'll say the Forty Strong will come down those aisles shoulder to shoulder."

"I guess I staya da home," suggested Cesare.

"No you don't," protested Mickey. "I was only kidding. This is going to be a Porky funeral with a police escort. Your seat is right alongside Captain O'Brien. You know the Cap'?"

"Sure."

"Well, then—he'll take care of you. Tell my father anything you want, but get him down there if you have to carry him."

"I try," promised Cesare; "but look out, you Keed—don't getta da kill!"

"Huh!" said Mickey.

So the rotund proprietor of Botelli's restaurant hunted up Count Erberto Micheletti and presented him with a square of red cardboard intended as a passport for Pegasus to the strange realm of a Marquis of Queensberry.

"What joke is this, Cesare?" demanded the recipient of the ticket. "You invita me to behold my son—last of the Michelettis—demeaning himself halfa-naked before a mob of ruffians? Rather ask me to wrench my heart out by the roots and to upon it spit! A curse upon thy head—"

"Better you shut up," advised Cesare, "and taka da tick'. Mickey, he's going to fight da bigga ruff' who bust da cane, and he do it because he love a dam' ol' fool! How many time, my friend, I tell you that boy, he's some time be great man? Take da tick', and tomorrow night we yella like hell!"

The poet of Telegraph Hill passed a dazed hand over his brow.

"Tomorrow night," he contradicted feebly, "I shall the great work of my life begin, and to all else close my eyes and my heart. Peace, Cesare—say no more!"

The proprietor of Botelli's restaurant mentally consigned the elder Micheletti to the place described by Dante, and deposited the rejected ticket in the most convenient receptacle, which happened to be the gaping coat pocket of his friend. Then he shrugged his shoulders, and departed to minister to the gastronomic needs of the rabble.

AT six o'clock the following evening Count Erberto Micheletti prepared his usual frugal repast on a gas-plate in his single room. At seven o'clock he seated himself at his desk to begin the swan-song of the House of Micheletti. At eight o'clock he threw his pen violently against the wall, and began to pace back and forth across the room. And at nine o'clock Pegasus spread his wings and soared across the Micheletti family chasm. Conscious that he had surrendered his soul to the evil one, but lured onward by the passion of parenthood, the father of the Fighting Wop of North Beach went stumbling down the aisle of Danny Nealon's pavilion toward the canvas battlefield of his son.

The glare of the arc-lights threw into bold relief the faces of the ringsiders and made of the whole pavilion a patchwork of grotesque shadows. The air was heavy with tobacco and the breathing of eight thousand men sitting sleeve to sleeve. White-coated barkers squirmed along the aisles, shouting their wares; the vast building vibrated to the hum of voices tuned to staccato pitch. Up in a dark corner of the gallery, a fight started, and the crowd rose, craning necks, and shouting the customary witticism:

"Put 'em in the ring! Let's all see it!"

Through the ropes crawled a couple of featherweights to serve as curtain-raiser. The referee made his appearance; then the announcer, towing Assemblyman De Forrest Smith, who hoped to make an impressive speech in behalf of a certain measure he was fathering.

"Mr. Smith will say a few words!" bawled the announcer.

The Assemblyman bowed.

"Hire a hall!" suggested the gallery. "Boo! Throw him out! Raspberry!"

Mr. Smith braved the rising tempest for fifteen seconds and then retired in confusion, with his speech intact. Down below, Attorney Dwight Sullivan, candidate for police judge, turned to the dazed figure at his right.

"Some men are just naturally damn fools. I'll lay you fifty cents on the kid in the red tights."

Count Micheletti shook his head. "*Dio!*" he murmured.

The gladiator in the red tights took the count in the first round.

"Too bad!" grunted Attorney Sullivan. "He looked like he needed a hair-cut. Oh, well!"

Held spellbound, like Prometheus with a vulture tearing at his entrails, Kid Mickey's father survived one after another of the preliminaries, until at eleven o'clock the great sacrifice was brought forth, and the hungry mob arose, clamoring.

What did Count Micheletti know until then of poetry, or drama? Here was an epic! Here was melodrama in the raw! The poet of Telegraph Hill gripped his chair and stared up at his first-born. Clad in a purple dressing-gown, Kid Mickey was waving a taped hand in acknowledgment of the tribute from the North Beach side of the pavilion.

The stricken figure at the ringside thought of the ancient cry of the Roman gladiators to the emperor:

"We who are about to die salute thee!"

Once more Attorney Dwight Sullivan felt called upon to express himself.

"Game little gink, but I can't see the sense in this match. Porky's too heavy, and he knows too much. Whom do you like?"

"Like?" said the elder Micheletti. "*Like?* Ah, *Dio!* This Keed Meek-ee—he is my son—my first-born!"

"The hell he is! Well, by golly, I'll help you root for him. Atta boy, Mickey—give 'em the old laugh. You're looking fine, Kid—and we're all pulling for you."

A WILD uproar greeted the appearance of Porky Schaupp, heavy-shouldered, lithe-limbed, older, wiser than his opponent, and grinning derisively at the opposite corner. Rival seconds pattered to and fro; photographers scrambled through the ropes, and marshaled the men into the conventional group; challengers filed into the ring, were introduced, and then strode into the opposing corners to grip the gloves of the combatants, and ceremoniously wish them luck. Jockey Williams and Jimmy the Fish, with nothing above their waists but undershirts, stood guard by the stool of the Fighting Wop, their shrewd young eyes taking in every development. Only once did Kid Mickey glance toward the chair that bore the same number as the ticket he had marked with a cross. That was when he was being introduced. Under the long, soft eyelashes dark pupils flashed downward a moment, and Count Micheletti's first-born looked into the pale face of his father. Three seats back of the poet, sat Cesare Botelli, oozing perspiration.

"On da nose!" shouted Cesare. "Killa da ruff'!"

Mickey grinned, and turned back to his corner. A moment later the bell banged.

Now, the squared circle is a stage on

which every variety of entertainment may be produced, from comedy to tragedy, from scientific slaughter to parlor gymnastics, from buffoonery to blood. But let him who seeks the soul-satisfying drama that rips the covering off the man-pack, keep away from the modern champions who pick their opponents, lock their titles in a safe, and go into the ring wondering what the motion-picture rights will bring. Rather let him buy a two-dollar seat in Danny Nealon's pavilion, watch the little ham-and-eggers buying glory and breakfast with their blood—see old Count Micheletti palpitating in the front rank of the mob, and hear little Jockey Williams squeaking like a phonograph:

"Both hands, Mickey, both hands! .... What do we care for a little blood? Step around, boy. .... Now you're boxing pretty. .... He can't hurt you. .... All he's got is a right hand. .... Keep out of the corner, Wop. .... Downstairs, Kid—play for the body! Once more you find the big bum! That's slowing him up! *Again!* He feels it! Left hand, Mickey, left hand! Oh, you Fighting Wop!"

BUT experience and twenty pounds weigh heavily in the pugilistic scales. The south-of-Market side of the pavilion throbbed exultantly as Porky Schaupp, caring naught for science nor defense, charged forward, battering Count Micheletti's first-born round the ring, wrenching free of the clinches, striving savagely to end matters quickly with that pile-driving right of his. And always Kid Mickey backed away under the merciless flogging, staggering in and out of the corners, sinking occasionally a left hand into the stomach, but ever giving ground, ever stepping away on the defensive.

Twice it seemed that the Fighting Wop of North Beach was going down under the hurricane—once in the second round, and again at the opening of the third. But each time he covered up, and managed to retain his feet and his senses. From Porky Schaupp's corner came explosive advice:

"Finish him up, big fellow! Shake him off and let him fall. One more, and he's through!"

But the third round ended with the pride of North Beach still on his feet, gory but clear-eyed. Porky Schaupp wobbled slightly as he headed for his stool, and at least two men at the ringside saw it.

Captain O'Brien whispered in the ear of Promoter Danny Nealon:

"Glory to God, Dan, if your little Eyetalian has got anything left, send him in!"

Attorney Dwight Sullivan turned for the last time to the man at his side.

"Cheer up! The other fellow has shot his bolt."

But Count Erberto Micheletti's classic features were gray and his tongue rattled in his parched throat.

The bell rang.

Kid Mickey slipped gracefully from his corner, touched gloves with his opponent for the last round. For a moment the slim, olive-tinted figure circled warily, studying the heavier man before him. Twice he feinted gracefully, flashed into a clinch and broke away. After him lum-

bered Porky Schaupp, his breath whistling through his teeth, his angry eyes searching for a vulnerable spot in the defense, his body crouched like a sinister machine.

Suddenly the Fighting Wop of North Beach leaped forward and his right whirled up against Porky's chin. The leader of the Columbus Heights gang reared, shook his head and then charged. The rush was stopped by a right that spat out like a whiff of smoke. Again he lowered his head and hurled himself forward, and a third time he was speared in midair by a crimson glove.

Wow! The lid flew off the gallery, and the north side of the house arose full-throated.

In the grip of delirium, Count Erberto Micheletti staggered to his feet. His jaws worked convulsively, but no sound emerged. Not ten feet away little Jockey Williams pounded on the canvas and shrilled through the bedlam:

"When Mickey connects, boys—they go down! Two bells, conductor! Give 'em the old two bells, and let's go! Walk in, you Fighting Wop! Walk in and finish him, you tiger! Two bells, and we go! We go—we go—*we go!*"

And showering lefts and rights to the jaw, the first-born of Count Erberto Micheletti sounded two bells to the glory of Pegasus, and went walking in! A left hook to the stomach, and Porky Schaupp began to crumple. Eight thousand men were on their feet roaring advice. But Kid Mickey heard but one voice: it came from a frock-coated old man at the ringside, shrieking the ancient battle-cry of the red-shirted Garibaldians:

"Avanti, Italiani—Avanti! Bravo, Angelo! Avanti, Micheletti!"

A left jab to the ribs, a right cross, and Porky Schaupp toppled into the arms of the hero of the Forty Strong. Kid Mickey swung him deliberately around until Porky's heaving shoulders were turned toward the corner from which the Garibaldi yells were rising. He nodded reassuringly, and then bent bleeding lips to an ear of the enemy.

"Break my old man's cane, will ya? Kick him in the pants, huh? Well, here's some poetry y' can understand. Two bells, boy—and you go to sleep in the lap of a count!"

He released his hold, and shoved the champion against the ropes. A moment Kid Mickey poised quivering—and then, like the rap of an ax, his right connected with the jaw, and Porky Schaupp descended. The House of Micheletti stood avenged!

WHAT a night! Long after Captain O'Brien and his squad of thirty huskies had cleared the aisles, and squashed the last jubilant member of the Forty Strong, the poet of Telegraph Hill remained in his son's dressing-room, quaffing the wine of victory in company with Cesare Botelli, Jimmy the Fish, Jockey Williams and the immortal Kid Mickey himself.

"What did I always say? Don't matter how big or tough they are, when Mickey connects, boys—they go down! Aint it the trut', now?"

"Why not?" demanded the Count. "Is he not a Micheletti of the first line?"

And so was bridged forever the family

chasm. When Kid Mickey left the pavilion that night, his hip pocket bulging with a winner-take-all souvenir, it was to accompany his father to the rookery on the hill, and to discuss plans for a combined future.

"Will you do something for me now?" said Mickey.

"Angelo—my Gigi, needa you ask?"

"Well, it's a poem," Mickey explained. "I'm kind of sweet on a girl down the Avenue, and I promised that if we ever made up, I'd ask you to write some lines about her. She's a darb!"

Count Micheletti beamed. "Tomorrow I shall write the love-poem of my life for you!"

"Tomorrow," said his son sleepily, "I'll buy you a new cane. Come to bed, now, and I'll try not to snore."

But Kid Mickey's efforts at silent slumber were not successful, and along toward morning Count Micheletti arose, donned a faded wrapper and sat himself down, pen in hand, to give free rein to inspiration. The Fighting Wop of North Beach slept the sleep of the conqueror, while by the candle-spattered table the poet of Telegraph Hill wooed the muse, his pen scratching busily on foolscap. The first veil of dawn saw the candle burned to the tin socket, and the wrapper-clad figure at the foot of Parnassus asleep.

Was that the wind against the blind—or the shade of Sappho scurrying in to peep over the shoulder of the sleeping poet? If it was really the spirit of the priestess of love, small wonder that the lady tittered. For behold, all that Count Erberto Micheletti had written was a single sentence, penned over and over again, in a hand of rare delicacy:

"When Mickey connects, boys—they go down!"

FIRES OF AMBITION

(Continued from page 55)

In addition to her many practical virtues, Mary was distinctly ornamental, and Alan Wetherby was a lover of the beautiful. There was no reason to doubt his friendliness, and so when he asked her to dine at his apartment in Park Avenue, she went there with the cheerful inquisitiveness of a house-wren investigating the larger abode of a purple martin.

From the moment that she entered the place, it was not difficult for her to realize how a discriminating taste and a love of the beautiful were a part of every thought of Alan Wetherby's existence. She stopped on the threshold of the drawing-room, not understanding the thrill of pleasure which went through her, except that she was in the presence of some new influence in her life. She listened in bewildered abstraction while he showed her his "period" furniture, his porcelains, ivories, tapestries and draperies, aware for the first time how vast was her ignorance of the things which led to the culture that she was seeking.

After dinner he showed her his gallery of portraits, a private collection of old English masters which he told her with some pride was only surpassed by one other in America. Reynolds, Gainsborough, Romney, Raeburn, Lawrence—they were just names to her; and the paintings were of handsome old men in wigs, and lovely ladies in the flowing garments of a bygone day—lords and ladies, dukes and duchesses, she was sure, with the marks of their high lineage written on their brows. Here was beauty in all its dignity—beauty, as Alan Wetherby saw it, at its very best. Nothing that she had ever seen had so clearly crystallized into definite form her vague longings to be a part of what was finest in life.

Her ignorance appalled her. She felt very insignificant as she sat huddled like a child in a huge armchair while the butler served the coffee, and Alan Wetherby told her of his adventures at Christie's, Knoedler's and elsewhere in the entrancing search for additions to his collection.

The love of beauty, taste, culture—they were a part of a different world from that in which she had trained herself. At school, at night-class, she had thought that all she had needed was an "education"—to find now that what she had learned was only a preliminary to something else. His phrases bewildered her, but she must learn what they meant, what everything that was beautiful meant.

"Oh, Mr. Wetherby," she said as he paused. "I feel so small—so ignorant—here. It's just—just as though you'd opened a door that had always been closed, to show me a—a new road to happiness."

He smiled at the imaginative quality of her thought.

"Happiness?" he sighed. "Perhaps. Yes. I think that is so—when beauty is spiritual, not sensuous. And yet the sensuous can be beautiful too, the velvety softness of a Shirvan rug, the color of a jar of Chinese porcelain, the shimmer of silk, the changeable shades in satin, the effect of light on various textures—all these give me a happiness that I can find in nothing else in the world. The men who made these pictures, these rugs, these porcelains and draperies, were all artists—they created something; they left the world a little more beautiful than they had found it."

"You too," she murmured. "You create beautiful things."

"Yes—beautiful things—but how perishable! One season—and they are cast aside, withered and faded like flowers."

"That *is* sad."

"The sadder, my dear, because they mean so little to those who buy them—the saddest when those who buy them are unworthy. I think that only those with beautiful souls should wear beautiful things." He shrugged his shoulders and gave a dry laugh. "And yet, perhaps, then no one could come to 'Madame Denise.' In that case there would be no 'Madame Denise,' and these things that you see here would have belonged to other people."

"You are, then, what is known as an idealist?" she asked.

"I love beauty. She is my goddess—for loveliness is feminine. I cannot endure having ugly things around me—or ugly people. They make me unhappy. To tell you the truth, you would not have had such an easy time getting a position with me if you had been plain. I like to look at you—oh, don't be alarmed. I'm just a harmless and rather lonely man. I like to look at you as I like to look at these pictures. I'm just that sort of a maniac—no other. You don't object?"

"And why should I?" she said whimsically. "You're not such a bad-looking creature yourself."

He laughed and tapped her playfully on the hand. "Blarney! Save your pretty speeches for those who will help you up in the world."

She stared at him for a moment. "And aren't you helping me up?"

"A step—just a step on the ladder, my dear."

"But I'm so ignorant. I've got to study; I've got to learn what all this means," she said almost fiercely.

He smiled. "I don't think that should be difficult for you. You can get culture of a sort from books. I will lend them to you. But taste is a gift of God. You have it. It is a part of your heritage of beauty."

"'Twas all I got, then," she said. "I was born in a peat-bog."

"A harebell!" he muttered. "I have seen them often growing there." He was thoughtful for a moment.

"You must know the perils," he went on as though thinking aloud. "A girl who is pretty should be twice as careful as one who is plain." He raised his chin and looked at her. "Do I give you superfluous advice? Will you be offended if I warn you not to be too polite to Mr. Reginald Cheever?"

She covered the little rush of self-consciousness by a shrug and a smile.

"Polite! Twice he's joined me on the street, and I was nearly run over getting away from him. And is he such a bold bad man, then?"

WETHERBY laughed, and then grew serious.

"Mr. Cheever is a product of the age. Too much money, too much leisure, too much Mrs. Despard—"

"You mean that he—that she—"

"Precisely," he finished dryly.

"What a pity!" she said. "And I thought she was so lovely!"

Her tone showed a genuine disappointment. Mrs. Despard, the first woman of the great world that she had met, had seemed a compound of all the graces.

"You are very kind to advise me, Mr. Wetherby," she said slowly. "But you ought to know that I'm not the kind to make that sort of a mistake."

He felt the mild reproof in her words, and his respect for her lost nothing in the encounter.

But even the subtle sometimes overreach the mark. Wetherby, who had meant to disenchant her, merely succeeded in arousing her curiosity.

"Mr. Cheever is rich, then?"

"Very. He inherited from an aunt. His father is Chauncey Cheever. You've heard of him? Railroads, real estate,

director of a dozen financial institutions. Old family, splendid social position—everything except the disappointment in his son."

"Oh!" said Mary quietly. "And Mrs. Despard?"

"The woman of thirty, most dangerous when she is unhappy at home. Husband is a hypochondriac—er—another word for a person who finds a melancholy pleasure in being constantly ailing."

"I see. And Mrs. Despard goes her own way?"

"Yes. She thinks it's her right. The money is all hers, you see."

"Poor man! What a pity!" And then: "And you let her have that beautiful blue dinner frock!" she flashed indignantly.

He laughed. "If the morals of my customers were their only recommendation to my costumes, many would dress in sackcloth. I'm afraid I've talked too much. It's not my habit. Mrs. Despard's affairs are public property, but I hope nevertheless that you will keep silent."

"Of course," said Mary.

BY the time that Reginald Cheever joined her again on the Avenue some days later, Mary had had plenty of time to weigh Mr. Wetherby's advice in the balance with her interest and curiosity. Mr. Cheever was such a "pleasant-spoken" man to bear so bad a name!

She was walking north now, for the new boarding-house which Miss Barnes recommended, though no more expensive than the old one, was in a more select neighborhood. In spite of the small encouragement to better acquaintance that she had given him, Mr. Cheever approached her at the cross-street with all the assurance in the world.

"I've been waiting for you for two days," he said with a laugh. "You wont be so cruel as to send me away?"

She looked straight before her and shrugged.

"It's a nice day," she said.

"Much nicer for seeing you. Please tell me that you wont vanish at the next corner."

"Not if the traffic is heavy. I nearly got run over the last time."

He smiled. "I wish I could understand why you don't want to be friendly. Wont you tell me?"

"Friendship isn't the matter of a minute or two, Mr. Cheever."

"Or an hour or two; but then, one has to make a beginning, doesn't one? I'm not a half-bad sort of a fellow when you get to know me."

"Aren't you? And is this what you've been waiting for me two days to tell me?"

"Yes. You think I'm taking advantage of an introduction you didn't ask for. You're that sort. I knew it the moment I saw you. But isn't it rather a pity to shut me out just on that account? I'd like to know you a little better if you'll let me."

She liked what he said about the introduction. It forgave many things.

"Well, here's the corner, and I've not run away yet," she said.

"Good. Let's begin by making believe we've known each other for years."

Mary smiled. She recalled at the moment what Mr. Al Crawley had said

about being a "fast worker" when he got started. Mr. Cheever's line of approach was from the same angle. But there was a difference.

"Let's believe that I met you at a dance uptown or at some country place," he said easily. "You weren't quite sure that you liked me at first, but when you saw how eager I was to let you know how much I thought of you, you relented a little. We went out motor- and horseback-riding, yachting on the Sound. And after a while when you found that you couldn't get rid of me, you listened while I told you how beautiful you were, and you thought how nice I had really been to you. And then you decided that I was a harmless sort of an idiot who couldn't possibly do any injury, and you let me walk with you and talk with you as much as I pleased."

"And there's where we are now?"

"Yes."

"And is that all that happened?" she said whimsically.

He grinned. "And what else?"

"Sure, I don't know. But if that's all, in all that time, it's no wonder I'm barely speaking to you."

"Oh, I say!"

She laughed for the first time, genuine unconscious laughter that had no thought for the beauty of her teeth—a child's laugh, wonderfully engaging, which somehow let down the barriers a little.

"I like fairy stories, but they're not much without a king or a prince in them," she said.

"But I'll be a king, a prince—anything to please you."

"That's sooner said than done."

"Riches, then—see!" And he took out some money. "Five—ten dollars! Here's a florist. You shall have some orchids."

"No, thank you, Mr. Cheever."

"A box of bonbons, then—"

But she shook her head firmly.

HE was disappointed, but he had a little thrill of admiration too. Her liking was not to be bought with trifles. Already she had justified the chase. He began to understand now. It was her chin—an admirable chin, white like her throat, and as firm. But her dignity daunted him a little.

"You mean to make our friendship difficult," he said.

"I don't mean to make it anything until I'm sure that it's friendship. You can't expect to be buying that with a box of candy."

"Let me earn it, then."

"That might take time."

"That's the one thing in the world I've got more of than anything else." Something warned him not to mention his money.

"But I haven't. I'm a terribly busy person."

She had picked up that much-abused adverb in the shop, and she rejoiced in the use of it.

"Wont you tell me something about yourself," he asked, "—how you happened to be working for Wetherby?"

She hesitated. There was no object in telling him of her struggle. "I decided to learn the business," she said airily. "I have taste. Most people dress so badly."

"So they do! But it's too bad that you have to work for a living."

"Why? I think it's fearfully interesting." Again a much-abused superlative.

"Oh, I don't know. It seems to me as if a girl with your beauty and cleverness should just spend her time lending grace to the world."

She looked up at him and smiled. He thought that he had pleased her. What she was really thinking was that his compliment was again reminiscent of Mr. Al Crawley.

They had reached the Park, and she stopped and turned.

"You're a bit of a blarney, Mr. Cheever. I think I'll be going back to my dinner."

She let him help her across the street, and they walked down on the other side.

When they reached the boarding-house, she gave him her hand and said good-by. But he held it with firm fingers.

"Oh, I say! Don't go in there for dinner. It looks dreadfully stuffy. Come with me to the Ritz."

She laughed. She had known that the invitation was coming. It seemed to be a part of the formula of masculine precession.

"No, thanks. But I'm very much obliged just the same."

"Perhaps, then, another night?"

"When we've known each other several years."

"Please—soon. When will I see you again?"

"How can I know?"

"Tomorrow? At the same time?"

"I'll think about it."

"I suppose that's all I can ask."

"Good night, Mr. Cheever. My hand, please. It has to go to dinner with me."

"Say that you'll dine with me tomorrow."

"Maybe tomorrow I'll say that I'll dine with you—sometime."

"I'll be patient, but persistent."

"Good night." She ran up the steps into the house.

Chapter Six

WITH the season in full swing, the Despards' house on the Avenue was a convenient stopping-place on the way uptown for a "dish" of tea and a cigarette, before one dressed for dinner. It was a house of white stone, with an English basement, a canopy of glass, three sets of front doors, and a man in livery constantly on the watch. "Tea" was an abstract term which meant anything from that innocent and cheering beverage itself to others less innocent and more cheering. Mrs. Despard enjoyed her popularity, and though as exclusive as it was possible to be in an age of constant encroachment, she found pleasure in the society of the "younger married set," a few unattached gentlemen of various ages, and a sprinkling of thirsty elderly matrons of unimpeachable social position.

Her own position in New York had been assured from the moment when Philip Despard had taken her and her millions for better or for worse. The Despards had been kowtowed to since the seventeen hundreds, when the distinguished Marquis of that name had

come from France with Lafayette, and forswearing title and crest (which Mrs. Despard had immediately adopted for her stationery and automobiles), had thrown in his lot with the growing nation. But it was not to Phil Despard that the kow-towing was done now, for Phil didn't count for much, but to his wife Gertrude, the daughter of a zinc-trust magnate, who, with an adaptability which only American-born women possess, had made herself a place that defied the mild reproach of her lineage and even the tongue of gossip.

But the pace had been too much for Phil Despard, who, beginning life a young lawyer with hopes of a career, had fallen before the temptation of sudden wealth, and had contented himself with feeble efforts in the administration of this considerable fortune, even relinquishing these at last to the offices of a trust company. And weary of the incessant gayety in which his wife persisted, he had retired permanently to the seclusion of his library, where with his cigarettes and his collection of stamps, to which he devoted most of his time, he led the life of one embittered by a poor digestion and an unstable character.

But today the four walls of his library were more than usually on Philip's nerves, and he was sauntering downstairs with the intention of a stroll in the Park, when he heard the laughter of Ruth Vanderhorst as he went down the hall. She was one that he liked, one of the few who still held any appreciation of him. They had known each other "always," and so he went in and greeted her. Ruth Vanderhorst was tall, dark and rather intense, with a habit of barbaric earrings and clinking ornaments of jade. She was original to the verge of eccentricity, a painter of international reputation, and otherwise a heretic from the social dogma in which she had been reared.

She made a place on the divan beside her; she and Despard talked, oblivious of the noisy chatter around the tea-table. He knew them all and was indifferent. Their vitality was too much for him—Bertha Pardee, who swore like a sailor and feared neither God nor the devil; Augusta Ames, wiry and tanned from over-golfing; the Bert Lascelles, who had met in Reno and were faring gayly forth upon the new venture; the soft-spoken Mrs. Northrop, still water that ran deep; Dick Somerville, the aviator; and some rustling dowagers avid for their afternoon tea and a morsel of gossip.

THEY were all very busy; and having thrown Despard, who counted for little in the house, a polite nod or a syllable, they resumed their conversations.

"Madame Denise," replied Clara Northrop to a question about the frock that she was wearing. "Do you like it?"

"Adorable," said Miss Ames.

"Denise!" put in Bertha Pardee with a quick glance at her hostess. "Isn't that the shop where Reggie's red-haired girl is?"

"There *is* a red-haired girl," purred Mrs. Northrop. "She's fearfully pretty." And then tactfully in Gertrude Despard's direction: "But I'm sure that you must be mistaken about Reggie."

But Miss Pardee wasn't to be daunted, for Reggie had paid her a devoted attention until Gertrude had taken him away from her. She owed Gertrude one.

"Mistaken!" she cried. "Indeed I'm not. Don't you suppose I know Reggie when I see him?"

"You ought to, dear," said Mrs. Despard over her tea-urn.

Somerville grinned at his highball.

"*Touchée*, Bertha!" he said.

"Shut up, Dicky. Reggie is a dear," she went on, "but it does seem a pity when he flaunts girls of that sort in our very faces."

She had scored heavily. She knew it by the added languidness of Gertrude's smile, and her sudden preoccupation with the teacups.

"He's been seen with her lately at the theater, supper, motoring. Didn't you know, Gertrude, dear?" She asked sweetly.

"Why shouldn't I know?" replied Mrs. Despard calmly, seizing what verbal weapons she could. "I took him to Denise. I introduced them. She's a dear little thing and quite harmless. . . . . Do have another cup, Augusta. No? What were we speaking of? Oh, Miss Ryan, the model. Do get her to show you that pale green silk with silver lace. It will become you, Bertha, darling."

IT was admirably done. She was in full command again, but there were many in the room who had guessed that this was the first she had known of Reggie's defection. Everyone, including Phil Despard, had listened. In the awkward silence that followed, the dowagers rustled their silks delightedly. Bertha Pardee rose. "Thanks, dearest," she said coolly. "I will. Awfully obliged for the cocktail. I'm off. Good-by, everybody." She went out with the Lascelles, with whom she had come.

"That was a cattish thing to tell," muttered Mrs. Vanderhorst to Despard.

He grinned, and fingered his mustache.

"I don't know," he said quietly. "Rather a joke on Gertie, I'd say."

There was a touch of bitter humor in his tone, and Ruth Vanderhorst glanced at him amusedly. "Oh, I didn't know you minded, Phil."

He shrugged. "I don't," he said wearily. "I don't care a damn about anything. But she's been no end of an idiot about Reggie. Even *I've* heard about it. Dutiful sister, you know. Things had to get pretty rotten before she would butt in."

"I see. It's too bad, Phil," she said. "I did so hope that you and Gertrude would be happy."

"Happy!" he sneered. "Easier said than done." He shrugged again. "And you know, Ruth, I might have made a fairly decent husband to some girl—once."

"You've got to get out of this rut, Phil," she said reprovingly. "You're just drying up. I think I'd regain a little of my old respect for you, if you'd take a few drinks and then go and give Reggie a trouncing."

"And have my stomach out for a week. Besides, Reggie would probably trounce *me*," he laughed. "Hadn't thought of that, had you? He's bigger than I am. No, thank you. And what's the use, now that he's off with the red-haired girl?"

He was really rather contemptible.

Only the shreds of her old affection kept her from telling him so. And yet he had once had courage, of a sort, before Gertie Taylor had come out of the West with her millions and her masterfulness.

ONE by one the guests had gone. Only Ruth Vanderhorst and Mrs. Northrop remained.

The entrance of Mr. Reginald Cheever some moments later gave Ruth Vanderhorst a start of curiosity. She glanced at the complaisant husband. His jaw had shot forward unpleasantly, and he was staring at his finger-nails.

"Good afternoon, Gertie—everybody," said Mr. Cheever cheerfully. "Am I too late for a highball? Hello, Phil." He crossed to the tea-table and dropped into the vacant chair by Mrs. Despard, who smiled at him rather too elaborately.

"So glad, Reggie—awfully nice of you to come. —Glasses, Walker."

But Phil Despard intercepted the man with the decanter. The reproval of Mrs. Vanderhorst had rekindled a spark of self-reliance. She watched him with interest. He gulped down the contents of the glass and made a grimace of disgust, aware that he would pay for this indiscretion, tomorrow.

"Tell us about her, Reggie," he said, assuming a jocular air. "It's all in the papers. Everybody's talking. You and the little red-haired girl."

Cheever turned slowly and stared at Despard, his glass poised in the air. Then he shot a quick glance at Gertrude.

"Who has been speaking of me?" he said quietly.

"Oh, you can't play the innocent," said Phil, "—can he, Mrs. Northrop? Bertha Pardee caught you red-handed—red-haired, I mean."

"I can't imagine—" began Cheever, glancing at Mrs. Despard again.

"Gertrude knows," Despard went on with a grin. "She introduced you at Denise's. She's a dear little thing and quite harmless." He laughed loudly.

"Gertrude—"

"I think Phil must mean Miss Ryan," said Mrs. Despard coolly.

"Oh—Miss Ryan! Yes—of course. Miss Ryan. Is she quite harmless, Reggie? Is she? Gertie says so. But then—ha-ha! Gertie says so many things."

Cheever emptied his glass and then passed his glance slowly around the room before he replied. When he did so, it was with a certain dignity.

"I met Miss Ryan—out. She is a very charming girl. It seems like rotten taste to be talking about her in this way here."

"Do be quiet, Phil," said Mrs. Despard tensely.

"Oh, very well, my dear," chuckled the husband as he set his glass down. "Of course! Anything to oblige. Just my little joke. Wouldn't have spoken for the world if I'd known it was so serious to anybody. What's a red-haired dressmaker between friends? Dear little harmless dressmaker, at that! Of course if she has Gertie's approval,"—he laughed again,—"I shouldn't object. God knows I don't. Don't blame you in the least, old man. Not in the least, especially if she's pretty."

"Oh, shut up, Phil," growled Cheever.

Despard shrugged. The bomb had been exploded. It amused him to think of the reckoning that was coming to Reggie. Mrs. Northrop and Mrs. Vanderhorst at this moment tactfully rose and made their adieux, and Despard followed them, still chuckling. Dutch courage, but none the less effective!

When they had gone, Reggie poured out another drink. Gertrude Despard was leaning back on the divan, her hands folded before her.

"You heard what they said?" she asked coolly.

"Rubbish!" he answered indifferently. "What's the matter with Phil? Indigestion?"

"Apparently you've taken no measures to hide your tracks. Is this the reason you've had other engagements when I've phoned you?"

He grinned at her cheerfully. "Oh, don't be tiresome, Gertie."

Mrs. Despard did not return his smile.

"Is it the truth or isn't it?"

"What?"

"Your devotion to this—this girl. Bertha Pardee says you've been seen with her everywhere."

"Bertha! She'd like nothing better than to make trouble between us."

"I'm afraid she's done so," said Mrs. Despard calmly.

Cheever got up and took a short turn around the room.

"Surely, Gertrude," he said quietly, "you can't be intending to set up a censorship over the women I meet."

"No—not in our own set. You know perfectly well what I mean. It's this," she said distinctly: "I don't propose to be put into competition with a promiscuous little dress-model."

A deep flush ran over his face.

"Oh, I say! I can't have you talking about Miss Ryan like that," he put in warmly. "It isn't fair to her, fair to me" —he lowered his voice a note—"or even fair to yourself."

Mrs. Despard laughed unpleasantly.

"You'll be telling me next that your intentions toward this girl are strictly honorable."

"It isn't necessary to speak of my intentions toward Miss Ryan. I like her immensely. I have taken her to the theater, to supper and gone motoring with her." He laughed. "There! You have my full confession."

HE went over to the divan and would have sat beside her, but she waved him away.

"You must think I'm a fool!" she flashed at him.

He shrugged.

"It seems to me that you're dishonoring yourself a little with this kind of talk. I've told you the truth. That ought to be enough."

"Perhaps it would be, if I believed you." She leaned back, smiling ironically. "Really, Reggie, do you think I'm dull enough to believe such stuff? You know, I'm not the kind to stand for this—this sort of an affront. The only possible kind of relationship between persons in—in our position, is one of complete confidence and understanding. I've been a fool about you, but I'm not going to have my pride dragged in the dust, my name linked with that of a common shop-girl."

He flushed and turned toward her, but she went on rapidly.

"You know I'm not the kind to die if you tell me the truth—to die for the love of any man. But I can't tolerate a situation like this. Bertha Pardee is a cat. She always was. She knew exactly what she was about, and her information, it seems, was fairly accurate. I've got to know just where I stand. If you're going to run with women of that stamp, you and I will have to part company."

"This conversation is unnecessarily brutal," he said quietly. "I have told you the truth. I want you to believe me—"

"And if I said I believed you, what assurance have I that you wont see this creature again?"

Cheever controlled himself with difficulty. He took two paces and then turned quickly.

"Oh, hang it all, Gertie! We're not married, you know."

She flinched at that. She hadn't thought he would be cruel enough to say that. She changed her tone to mocking.

"Let me try to believe what you say," she said with a dry laugh. "The girl has the highest principles. You see in her a mind that will be worthy of your patronage. Your affair is one of the intellect only. And your love of the beautiful—what do you talk about, Reggie? Tell me. The purely intellectual type of dress-model is a new one to me—"

"Oh, let up, will you?" he protested.

"But it's true! Of course it's true. You've said so. You've insisted on it. Does she keep you dangling, Reggie? And what's the end of it all? You're not going to marry her, are you?"

"I've had about enough of this," he muttered. "I didn't come here to quarrel. You're unreasonable—"

"When you remind me that we're not married."

"I didn't mean that. You drove me to it."

"It's quite true. Perhaps it's just as well that you spoke of it."

"Oh, I'm sorry," he said with a shrug. "Just forget it, will you?"

She rose.

"I think you had better go away now, Reggie," she said calmly. "Perhaps I'll see you when you come again. Perhaps I wont. Perhaps you wont want to come."

"Please, Gertie." He tried to take her hands, but she put them behind her. "Why have you made all this fuss about nothing? Just because—"

"Go, Reggie, please."

He glanced at her, turned and left the room. In the hall the man was just opening the door to admit Phil Despard, who was grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"Hello, Reggie! What's the matter?" he asked. "You look peevish."

Cheever glared and passed him by without speaking.

Despard put his tongue in his cheek and proceeded indoors. There was trouble for him there, but the amusement he had derived from the situation was worth it.

In the next installment this absorbing novel reaches a specially interesting climax. Watch for it—in the next, the March, issue.

THE FATTED CALF

(Continued from page 88)

Baird returned to the hotel. He sorted out another ancient issue of the *Gleaner* and scanned it without realizing what he read. Same old familiar sheet, but something—what was it?—seemed to be left out. Oh, yes, there wasn't a single lost cow listed in this number. Of course, a man couldn't gather a bunch of this off-color, high-marked stuff round here and hold it until ready to drive it off. Some one would spot it, sure. The only way he could handle them would be as dressed beef. Out Mandan way, when a man killed a beef, he must hang the hide up until the hide-inspector made his rounds and verified the brand. Probably they didn't have a hide-inspector here—didn't need one. It was all a part of that feeling of everyone trusting all the others in this country, and counting every man to be on the square.

The next day was Sunday and Andy attended church. Con Jenkins and two other old-young business men greeted him cordially at the door. Their formulæ were the same, and each referred to himself in the plural sense.

"We're glad to see you're one of us, Andy," each one said.

All through the service Baird was conscious of some lack; and toward the end, the curtain of his mind rolled back, and he saw the interior and occupants of the old church as they had been eighteen years before. The lack was the absence of Judge Creighton's family from their appointed pew, and the void left at the end of the next row behind, where a rusty black bonnet had invariably appeared. Aunt Painter's bonnet! She had been almost a mother to him—counselor, guide and friend; actually the mother of none, she had just as actually mothered half the stray young outlaws in the neighborhood. She had fried his fish and squirrels that he dared not take home. He reproached himself for not having looked the little old lady up before.

After church he headed for the Painter cabin on the outskirts of town, but the slatternly woman who answered his rap was a stranger to Baird. Mis' Painter was "on the county" now, she explained—had gone out to the "county house" ten days ago. Baird swung hurriedly out of the gate and turned down a country road, then reversed his course after twenty yards. He would see Mary Creighton first. At least he could smooth out Mary's and Aunt Painter's troubles, and he owed them that much for not having looked them up before.

He knew he would find Mary Creighton's pretty face haggard and lined from overwork. He had heard so often of her lack of new clothes that he unconsciously expected to see a patchwork-quilt effect of garments when she appeared—but neatly patched of course, for Mary would always be neat; and he knew by now that she didn't hold her head as high as she once had—and he was prepared for a sort of

turtle-wise forward thrust of neck. But no one answered his peremptory summons. Well, he'd see her on his way back from the county farm.

THIS institution lay four miles from town, halfway to the county seat. As he moved along, he said things that were not Sunday talk, and turned over in his mind the information the slattern had given him. Of course, Con Jenkins had been forbearing and hadn't insisted on payment until after the notes for unpaid interest had piled up and compounded for six years. The woman had explained all that. The place wasn't very valuable, and on the forced sale no one had bid even as high as Con's lien against it. And Mr. Jenkins had really felt that Mis' Painter would be better off out there. He'd talked real kindly to her, and she'd seen it that way herself, without any argument to the contrary at all. It was really because Mr. Jenkins had felt that way was best all around. He'd explained that to folks.

Business was business, Andy told himself, and he had no call to feel but that it was just and right; still, he couldn't quite forget the fact that the rate had been ten per cent, the "going rate;" with a "little commission" on top of that. Damn Con! He'd always been closer than the bark on a tree. A plan whereby he could kill two birds with one stone occurred to Baird. He remembered that Aunty Painter had one day confided to him that she too was vain enough to long to live in the Creighton house. He'd give Mary her price for the place so she could take the piratical Tommy and get away, and he'd install Aunty Painter instead.

Two miles out of town a girl came toward him down the road, but he didn't see her. The girl noted the purposeful stride of the tall figure, his slightly rolling gait seeming to allow for the swing of a separate movement, the roll of a horse perhaps. He reached up with an abrupt sweep and tugged his hat still farther down over his eyes, and suddenly the girl smiled.

"Awake," she said. "Poor Andy—he's come out of the dream at last."

Baird nearly ran into her in his abstraction, stopped and began an awkward apology, took in the trim suit and neat little hat, the empty basket in her hand, then gazed blankly into Mary Creighton's face. There were no tired, sagging lines, and her head did not droop with a turtle-neck thrust, but was carried in the same manner that he remembered of old. Somebody had lied to him. This was the youngest, freshest, best-dressed woman he had seen in Ridgeville.

"Poor Andy!" Mary Creighton said. "You've been having a nice dream for eighteen years. It's too bad you ever came back."

He felt a sudden disappointment. Mary said it was too bad he'd come back. Hilda Ransome had assured him repeatedly that it was good to see him again, and he wished that Mary might feel the same way about it. But it was clear that she did not. He could think of little to say.

"I didn't see you at church," he said.

"No," she smiled, "I couldn't go. I'll go tonight instead."

"I might go back myself," he said, "if the doorkeepers work in shifts; but not if Con Jenkins and his crowd are on duty evenings as well as days. They met me on the threshold and slapped me on the back, all the while telling me they were glad I was one of them—which I'm not." He felt he had said too much. "If I could get round them, I'd like to sit in with the rest," he qualified.

Mary Creighton laughed, and he wondered how folks could have imagined that she was down and out—a girl with a laugh like that.

"No, you're not one of them, Andy," she agreed.

They had stepped to one side to let an approaching buggy pass, and Baird leaned back against the rails of the fence. The occupant of the rig did not see them until almost opposite, and in his surprise he pulled on the reins and stopped. Once halted, Lafe Howard felt called upon to chat. All Ridgeville had speculated as to Andy Baird's prosperity, but the young man himself had never once come forth and made a flat statement of the worth or nature of his worldly goods. The town marshal was sly—and curious concerning Andy's reported prosperity.

"Well, Andy," he remarked, "we'll all be glad to hear that you've done as well as William. No one can deny that William has got ahead. But there's a mighty true saying that a rolling stone gathers no moss."

Baird's spirits had soared with hearing Mary Creighton's laugh. By a swift mental computation he estimated his yearly gains to exceed the amount that William made in ten, but he refrained from stating this. Instead he recalled a recent fragment of Lafe's own speech.

"You don't know much about stones, Lafe," he said. "You're not up on stones. Now, the rocks round here don't grow very heavy moss, but when any of it gets scraped off, it makes a scratch on the stone till it feels as if a piece had been chipped off its very heart. Out there the moss grows thicker, and there's more room to roll, and frequently a big slab of moss gets jarred loose; but some way it don't seem to mar the disposition of the rock itself. Besides, the rocks take care to keep the moss intact except in spots. That's the way it works with rolling stones."

Mary Creighton laughed again, and Baird laughed with her. Lafe chuckled, touched the horse lightly and jogged on down the road toward town, his fat sides shaking. Once round the bend, the shaking ceased.

"No sense to that," he said. "Wa'n't head nor tail to it. That boy's in love! Used to laugh at nothing myself one time and another, when I was sweet on some girl. Now, I wonder which one of the two it is." He remembered that Pete Stilwell's counsel would be available in the lobby of the Maple Leaf, and he shook the reins.

MARY CREIGHTON prepared to follow Lafe, but hesitated and looked up at Baird.

"If you're only out for exercise," she said, "you might walk back with me."

He started to accept, but put temptation away from him and shook his head.

"I just can't," he said regretfully. "I've got to travel on this way a piece."

Mary hesitated again, then spoke her mind:

"No, you don't. Perhaps she'd rather you wouldn't see her out there, you know. She's coming in tomorrow to stay with me. You can see her then. She'll be a great help—and company. I didn't hear until Tuesday that she'd gone, and I couldn't get out during the week."

"How did you know where I was headed?" he asked perplexedly.

"Well, you know that little bird you've always heard about," she laughed. "Maybe I gathered it from him—eighteen years ago; who knows?" She caught his elbow and turned him back toward town. "Come on; you'll have to trudge right along if you're going to keep up with me."

Twice on the way in he thought of broaching his scheme of buying the Creighton house and installing Aunty Painter there, but he felt that mentioning such a thing to Mary Creighton would be treading on dangerous ground. In front of the big white house, she gave him a smile and nod, passing through the gate in the picket fence before he fully realized that she was leaving him.

THAT evening he made furtive comparisons between Hilda Ransome's filmy garments and the costume Mary Creighton had worn. He decided that Mary's hat and suit had been purchased so recently that Hilda had not yet seen them—hence her impression that Mary had had no new clothes in "land knows how long." It was the first time he had really noticed any one of Hilda Ransome's costumes, aside from a general impression that she looked well. This detailed inspection gave him an odd notion that there were too many loose ends in her attire; she was draped with ornamentations that seemingly had no relation to one another.

He decided that Aunty Painter's misfortune had unduly upset him and rendered him too critical, and he flushed guiltily as Hilda looked up and caught him studying her mouth. Miss Ransome misunderstood the flush and gave him a provocative little pout, and when he took his leave she gave his shoulder a friendly little pat. But when the door had closed behind him, the discontented droop deepened at the corners of her mouth.

"The little cat!" she thought. "I wonder how she manages to touch herself up so she looks like twenty-five instead of thirty-three—at noon!" Lafe Howard had been whispering it about that he'd come upon Andy and Mary Creighton standing alongside a fence two miles outside of town, and they'd just stood there laughing about not much of anything. In some mysterious fashion the news leaked out, and some one had told Hilda Ransome just because they thought she ought to know. It was only right that she should, since Andy had been setting up with her.

"I expect it would have been one long fight to keep him from moving back to some hole like Wade's Crossing, anyway," Miss Ransome philosophized. "I only hope she gets him, and they both clear out of here and stay!"

THE following morning Andy turned into Con Jenkins' office. Con kept a set of abstract-books, and he could look up the records of the Creighton place. It stood in Mary Creighton's name with a first mortgage of two thousand against it, held by William Baird; a string of smaller second mortgages had been recorded, then released, only to be replaced by another entry, each succeeding one for a larger amount. The last one was still of record, unreleased, for eight hundred and some; twenty-eight hundred odd against the place. That ever-growing second incumbrance had been security for unpaid interest, Baird surmised.

He started out to see William in the afternoon. He would buy up the lien against the Creighton place himself. He'd always wanted to own it, anyhow. Surely William would not refuse to sell. And yet—a small voice told him that William would refuse. The rumors that William could not decide between residing in Judge Creighton's house and the handling of the Ransome dollars kept climbing uppermost in his mind.

Andy's method of doing business was usually direct, not roundabout, but in the matter of purchasing the Creighton mortgage, he first engaged William in converse about cows—and ended the same way, without ever having made any reference to the matter in hand. He couldn't bring himself to discuss this thing with Will, and presently took his leave.

As he entered town, Mary Creighton passed across the street from him on her way home from the day's teaching. She swept him a friendly little nod. As he rounded the next corner, Hilda Ransome stood in her front yard half a block down the street, and her handkerchief fluttered a greeting. Why hadn't Mary waved like that? And why had she told him it was too bad that he ever came back?

Mary Creighton's affairs were in rather bad shape, after all, he reflected, notwithstanding her jolly laugh. She was the kind that would take trouble standing up and never let on. In the evening he strayed toward the Ransome house from force of habit, but turned off a block before reaching it, without any definite idea of where he was going—and he suddenly realized that he had just rapped loudly on Mary Creighton's front door.

He felt rather hot and uncomfortable. The old awe that this place had always inspired in him as a boy returned now to the man. He shook himself angrily and reminded himself that he was free, white and thirty-five. Then Mary Creighton opened the door. It was not quite dark, and he thought again how nice she looked, that she certainly didn't lack for clothes. She had on some fresh-looking white apron effect over a dark-blue dress. It struck him that there were no loose ends and dangling whatnots about her.

There was a wood fire in the big fireplace, and Mary left him there. She'd send Aunt Painter in to him while she finished a few odds and ends of the evening's work. Aunty Painter was undoubtedly glad to see him and emphatically made it known.

"Land sakes!" she said. "You've lengthened out a lot since I laid eyes on you last. I've wondered time and again

where you could be and what sort of devilment you was at. But wherever it was, I knowed you'd be doing well. Judge Creighton always said you was one of the few boys round here that had get-up-and-go. He told me that things would be moving in whatever neighborhood you was located in. He always spoke well of you."

Andy Baird felt a warm glow of pleasure from hearing that Judge Creighton, the biggest man in town, had remembered the long-legged boy who had departed on the rods of a freight. An enlarged picture of the Judge, framed, hung above the mantel of the fireplace. There was nothing uppish about that face, Andy thought—strong, rather, and kindly.

MARY CREIGHTON came in with some sewing, and a few moments later Tommy burst in, then stopped abruptly when he discovered Baird. Curiosity overcame bashfulness in Tommy when he divined that this was the stranger from out Mandan way. Mandan had a far-off, interesting sort of a sound. Tommy often made furtive trips to the depot and watched the trains go by, pondering over the strange places they must pass through.

"I guess Mandan is clear at the end of the railroad," he remarked invitingly.

"Not clear at the end of the road," Andy said, "—just kind of off to one side."

The youth's curiosity was insatiable, and Baird told him much concerning life in the Mandan strip. When he left, Tommy trailed him to the door.

"Listen, you come back again," he urged. "I'll finish the chores early so we can have plenty of time to talk."

Andy acted on that invitation, and came again. He spent the next five evenings at the Creighton home. He often studied Mary Creighton's mouth. There was no discontented droop about its corners, a humorous quirk instead. It was a kissable mouth. But Mary wasn't the kissing kind. He had a feeling that he couldn't if he tried.

Twice she looked up and caught his eyes upon her mouth, and each time he flushed guiltily and turned away. There was no way to tell whether or not she misunderstood the flush, for Mary Creighton did not pout. She wasn't the pouting kind.

On Saturday afternoon he met Tommy at the edge of town. Their cow had broken out and strayed off somewhere the night before, he said. He hadn't been able to locate her. Well, anyway, if she didn't turn up, he wouldn't have to milk her and deliver the milk. Something boiled up in Baird. Some one was helping all those cows to get lost. He had known it all along, but had fought the knowledge down, refusing to let one jarring thought intrude upon his vision of a peaceful spot where everyone was on the square.

He strode to the Creighton place and rapidly circled the fence round the two-acre pasture lot back of the barn until he located the sagging wires at the spot where the cow had broken through. There were the marks of some heavy instrument used to pry the staples out. Andy had lived too long in a land where each

man watched his own and noted every sign; he could not help but piece together the bits of sign that fell under his observation. If he steeled his conscious mind against it, the subconscious worked the problem out and presented it to him in its entirety.

He started out of town but changed his mind within half a mile and returned to the Maple Leaf. It was within two hours of midnight when he left it and headed down the river road. And as he walked, he was once more a man of action, his vision cleared—no longer an ostrich with his head in the sands of an ancient dream.

Four-fifths of the county was mortgaged to the other fifth. How well he knew the "little commissions" over and above the legal limit of ten per cent, the clacking tongues—oh, well, all that didn't really matter. It was beside the main fact.

He thought of old Conger Wade's brief visit to Waconah.

"Old Conger Wade!" he mused. "He was the luckiest man I ever knew. He didn't stay long enough to find out."

Andy knew, too, why Mary Creighton had said it was too bad that he ever came back.

THERE was a lantern swaying down in Big Bend, and as he turned into the lane he stepped back among the trees to let a wagon, coming out, pass by. A dressed and quartered beef hung cooling in the farmyard. He opened the door and went in.

"Baird is a good old name, Will," he said abruptly to the man inside. "You hammered that into me yourself, and I've never done anything to bring reproach on it. I've done some things that don't accord with your code, but I never yet rustled a beef—although I've helped lead the ponies out from under several men that have." He held up his hand for silence as William started to speak.

"I know you, Will. I always have. I've looked too many men in the face and sized them up to be able to fool myself about one now, even when I try. I know what every man around here stands for—some of 'em good, some only harmless, and some of 'em bad, like you find them anywhere else. Only I tried not to believe what I saw. Most places men run just the same.

"You killed the fatted calf, Will, the night the prodigal returned, but the calf was some one else's. Right is your god, and you never did a thing in your life that wasn't just—and right. You didn't know it was a rustled calf. If Bart Hopper buys a few cows at such a price that he can sell them under the market—way under—to you, why, it's right enough. You don't take the *Gleaner*, because it costs three dollars a year. You don't advertise, because that costs money too. And you don't read advertisements for fear you'd be tempted to buy. So you never hear of all those stray cows that Bart Hopper holds over a day or two down in the hollow of Little Bend, and turns in for the reward if some one looks in, and sells under the market to you if they don't. So you're still in the right. But one thing I don't

understand: how do those hides disappear from that strict conscience of yours? They're worth money too."

William eyed him coldly.

"Andy, this is a serious thing you have said. I will ask you to leave. Bart Hopper takes the hides himself. He traps furs and can dispose of hides to better advantage than I can. Now you can go."

"Yes, and you're going too," Baird said. "You're about to view something for once that's wrong." William looked into eyes that were determined and hard, and nodded assent.

"After all, Will, we're a good deal alike," the younger brother remarked as he led the way. "We both fool ourselves. I shut my eyes tight and tried hard to believe that this one spot out of the world was free from dishonesty. You fooled yourself about those cows. Yet way down deep, both of us knew. Tomorrow you're going to come to Con's office and sell that Creighton mortgage to me. Oh, I'll pay you for it, face, interest and all—and quit-claim my interest to you in this place. I don't want to scrape off any moss that will kill the rock. But you be there prompt at ten."

A fire blazed merrily in Little Bend, and as the two brothers turned through the woods, the odor of scorched hair reached them on the breeze. Bart Hopper sat drowsily before a blazing heap of drift-logs on which sizzled strips of hide. He noticed the queer expression in Andy's eyes and the pasty look of the other's face, and he rose to his feet with a pitchfork gripped in his hand—only to drop it as the younger Baird reached under his left armpit and produced something that looked ugly and blue in the light of the fire.

"I wont use it," he said. "But I thought it would help you stand hitched, to know that I had it along—while I explained to William that this is the good advantage you find in disposing of hides. I guess he can see for himself. I'm going to take the *Gleaner* out where I live and scan every issue for some sign of cows that have strayed off from home. I'm expecting notices like that to be scarce."

WITHOUT further words, he turned and made off through the woods. An hour later he rapped on Mary Creighton's door.

"It's about the cow, Mary," he said as she called from a window above. But when, some five minutes later, she opened the door, he did not refer to the missing cow.

"Let's clear out of this place, Mary," he said. "We don't belong here, either one of us. I want you, girl—more than I ever wanted anything in my life. Let me take you out where folks aren't always doing right—where they do wrong a lot of the time but find time to do some good. I'm sick to death of folks that always do right without ever doing any good. Please, girl, say you'll go."

Before she could answer, he sketched the details of the arrangement in a single breath. Tommy would grow like a weed out there. Aunty Painter would never like any place but Ridgeville, and she could stay and look after the big white house. And if she'd only say the word, he'd have the minister out there at nine, and they could be gone by noon. He paused.

"Say it, Mary, say it, girl!" he urged.

Only one thought troubled Mary—a thought that proved she was a normal girl, for after all, when a girl thinks of marriage, it is decreed that she must give at least a little thought to clothes. But she remembered that Andy's mind seemed not to run overmuch to wardrobe, and she nodded.

"Of course I'll go," she said. "But Andy, you wont mind because I haven't any good-looking clothes?"

"Clothes!" he exclaimed, and honest amazement stamped his features. "Why, honey, you have the best-looking rig in town. I'm halfway marrying you for your clothes." And then he was blissfully conscious that Mary *was* the kissing kind of girl.

THE next morning at somewhere round half-past ten Mrs. Andy Baird sat in the best livery rig in town while her husband entered Conrad Jenkins' office to sign and witness the signing of a few important documents. The news had leaked. Pete Stilwell leaned casually on a rail near by. Others strolled slowly across the street.

"Some claims he is almost a millionaire," Pete said. "Look how she holds up her head."

Andy emerged, and his brother was with him. Andy turned and sized William up.

"I always want you to remember one thing," he said. "What I'm going to do to you is all for your own best good." And what he did to William was the town talk for many moons. This task completed, he strolled over to where Conrad Jenkins stood, shook him violently, picked him up and tossed him back through his office door. He then looked round as if to see if there was any detail he might have overlooked, and his eye chanced to center on Lafe Howard. The town marshal's face turned a deeper shade, and he fumbled hurriedly at the buttoned flap of one hip pocket. Andy laughed.

"Don't you, Lafe!" he admonished. "You're a pretty good old Lafe, after all. Most people are."

Mary had not fainted; neither had she screamed. A flush of pleased excitement tinged her cheeks, and her steady hand restrained Tommy from jumping out of the rig. As Andy Baird took his seat and drove away, there was an upward quirk at the corners of her mouth.

"That was a right childish thing to do," he said. "But they say there's some good comes out of everything. At least I've furnished enough material to keep the he-gossips busy in the lobby of the Maple Leaf for the rest of their natural lives."

Two days thereafter he looked from the windows of the train at the gray expanse of sage. Tommy had just inquired if a speck upon a distant mountain top was an Indian or a mountain sheep, but Andy hadn't heard.

"Home again!" he exulted, reaching for Mary's hand. "Home again after eighteen days!"

How Strong Are You

Can You Do These Things?

Lift 200 or more overhead with one arm;

Bend and break a horse shoe;

Tear two decks of playing cards;

Bend spikes;

Chin yourself with one hand.

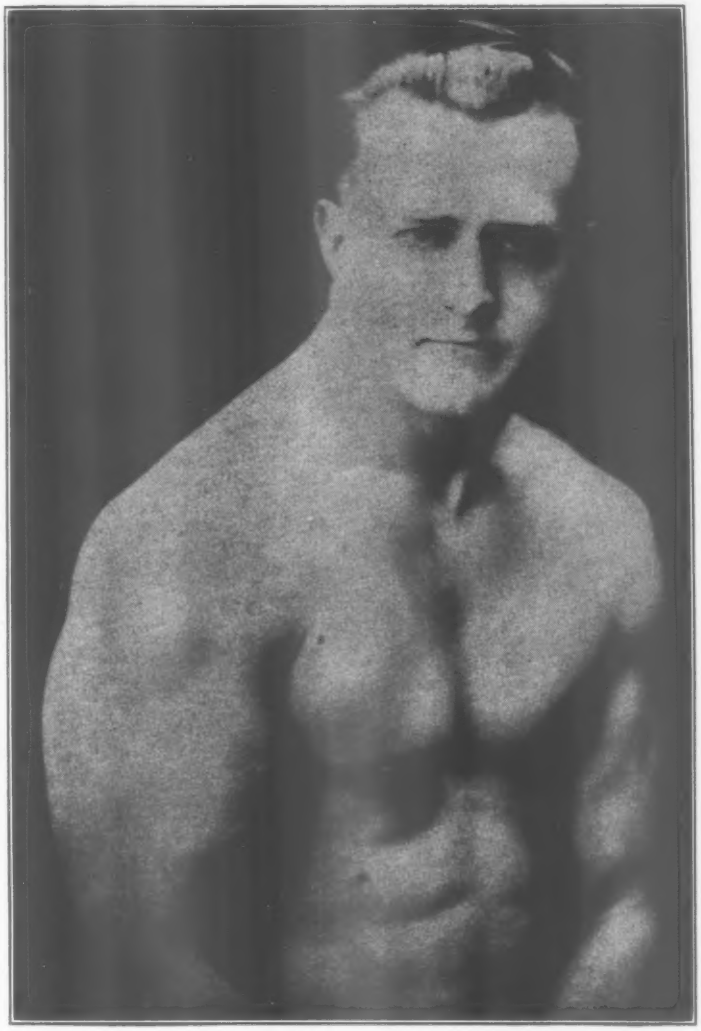
Can you do any of them? I can and many of my pupils can. It is remarkable the things a man really can do if he will make up his mind to be strong. Any man. It is natural for the human body to be strong. It is unnatural to be weak. One leading writer on physical culture says: "It is criminal to be weak." I have taken men who were ridiculed because of their frail make-up and developed them into the strongest men of their locality.

I Want You For 90 Days

These are the days that call for speed. It once took four weeks to cross the ocean—now it takes less than one. In olden days it took years to develop a strong, healthy body. I can completely transform you in 90 days. Yes, make a complete change in your entire physical make-up. In 30 days I guarantee to increase your biceps one full inch. I also guarantee to increase your chest two full inches. But I don't quit there. I don't stop till you're a finished athlete—a real strong man. I will broaden your shoulders, deepen your chest, strengthen your neck. I will give you the arms and legs of a Hercules. I will put an armor plate of muscle over your entire body. But with it comes the strong, powerful lungs which enrich the blood, putting new life into your entire being. You will have the spring to your step and the flash to your eyes. You will be bubbling over with strength, pep and vitality.

A Doctor Who Takes His Own Medicine

Many say that any form of exercise is good, but this is not true. I have seen men working in the mills who literally killed themselves with exercise. They ruined their heart or other vital organs, ruptured themselves or killed off what little vitality they possessed. I was a frail weakling myself in search of health and strength. I spent years in study and research, analyzing my own defects to find what I needed. After many tests and experiments, I discovered the secret of progressive exercising. I have increased my own arm over 6½ inches, my neck 3 inches and other parts of my body in proportion. I decided to become a public benefactor and impart this knowledge to others. Physicians and the highest authorities on physical culture have tested my system and pronounced it to be the surest means of acquiring perfect manhood. Do you crave a strong, well-proportioned body and the abundance of health which go with it? Are you true to yourself? If so spend a pleasant half hour in learning how to attain it. The knowledge is yours for the asking.



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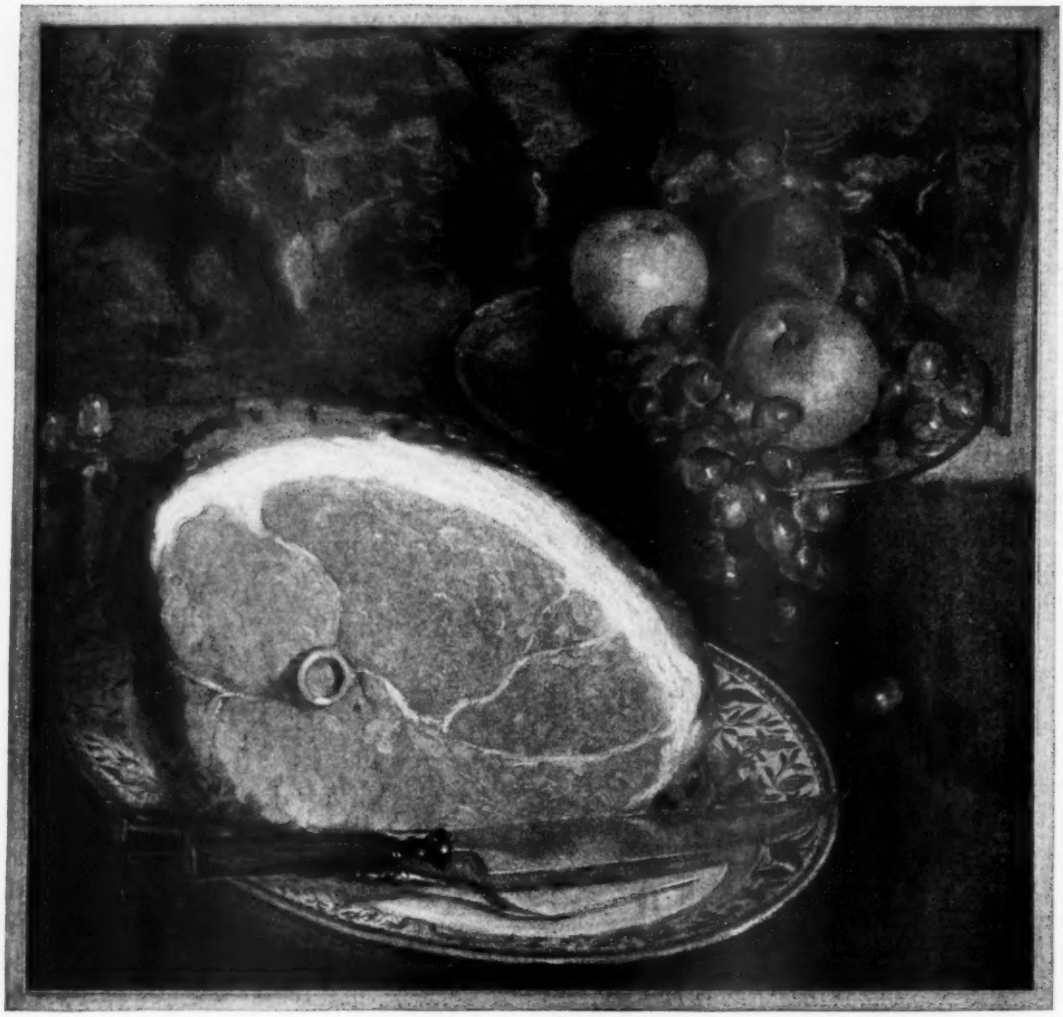
Dear Sir:—I enclose herewith 10 cents for which you are to send me, without obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." (Please write or print plainly.)

Name .....

Address .....

City..... State.....



Its choice bespeaks the discriminating hostess

When you serve a Premium Ham you enhance your reputation as a hostess. For, in the tenderness and exquisite flavor of this ham, your guests perceive that you have chosen for them with most considerate care

Swift's Premium Hams and Bacon

A distinctive way to serve it

Cover the butt end of a Premium Ham with cold water, bring to boil and simmer gently, allowing 20 minutes for each pound. Then remove the rind and—here's the special touch—spread mustard over the ham fat and sprinkle generously with brown sugar. Stud the top with cloves and bake for an hour in a moderate oven.

Swift & Company
U. S. A.